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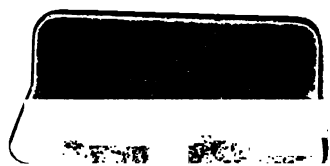
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LAY SERMONS

D. C. DAVIES





THE CHRIST FOR ALL THE AGES.



THE CHRIST FOR ALL THE AGES

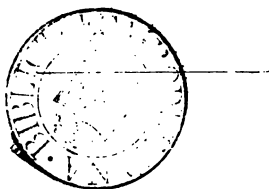
AND OTHER

LAY SERMONS

PREACHED ON THE NORTH WALES BORDER.

BY

D. C. DAVIES.



LONDON:
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1871.

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ASKEW ROBERTS.
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OSWESTRY.



DEDICATION.

TO MY DEAR FRIENDS IN THE VILLAGES AROUND
OSWESTRY, THESE MEMORIALS OF HAPPY SUNDAYS SPENT
TOGETHER ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

D. C. D.

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PREFACE.

THE Congregational Church worshipping in the Old Chapel, Oswestry, has long been honourably distinguished for the prominent position which lay preaching has occupied as one of its recognized forms of Christian service.

The need for this kind of religious labour has arisen out of the activities of former ministers and members of the Church.

At the beginning of the present century, the religious condition of the Welsh Marches might have been truthfully described as one of deep spiritual ignorance and destitution. There were no places of worship except the Parish Churches, which lay very far apart, and were often, from the state of the roads, inaccessible to the poorer part of the population; nor is it any reflection upon the present worshippers in those buildings to say, that the cold and dry morality which formed the staple of preaching at that period, was not calculated to impress the hearts, or influence the lives of those who attended them.

The Rev. John Whitridge, who was then, and for many years afterwards, minister at the Old Chapel, felt himself constrained to supply, in part at least, this pressing spiritual

need in the rural districts. This he endeavoured to do by preaching in such cottages and farmhouses in the district as were opened to him. He was assisted in this evangelistic work by young men who were studying under his care for the regular ministry among the Independents, and also by members of his own congregation whom he deemed to be possessed of the requisite gifts and graces.

After Mr. Whitridge's death, this department of Christian labour was taken up with the vigour of a strong Christian manhood by the Rev. T. W. Jenkyn, known afterwards as Dr. Jenkyn, Principal of Coward College, London, who was favourably known to the religious and general public by his works on the "Atonement," and on "The Work of the Holy Spirit," as well as by scientific writings. During his ministry, many regular congregations were gathered, Chapels were built, and Christian Fellowships were formed in the villages around Oswestry; some of these became separate churches, strong enough to possess ministers of their own. Others, however, unable to support a minister altogether devoted to the work in an efficient manner, have committed themselves from time to time to the ministrations of four or five "lay preachers," one of whom they have usually chosen to conduct the celebration of the sacraments, and in other ways to perform as much of the office of a minister to them, as his ordinary avocations would allow; while for the hamlets and villages which have retained their connection with the parent Church in Oswestry, a plan or arrangement has continued to be made quarterly, by which such of the members as are led and called to the work of preaching, are guided to their Sunday

labours. Happily this work, which was begun by men of God who have entered into rest, has been continued under the guidance, and with the hearty co-operation of each succeeding minister of the Church meeting in the Old Chapel, until now.

Graciously led in very early life into the fellowship of this Church ; but a few years passed by—too few, perhaps ; before I was led to the exercise of whatever gifts I had, in preaching. Since those early days I have passed gradually from the position of an occasional village preacher to that of the half pastoral relationship to which I have referred.

I am far from regretting that a portion of the current of my life has been turned into this channel. The necessity which has thus been laid upon me to communicate to others by preaching, has given to me a greater zest for reading, and an amount of pleasure far greater than I should otherwise have known in the acquisition of knowledge. Nor is it vanity on my part to say, that the opportunity thus given to me to direct sinners to Christ, and of helping to guide and comfort, and purify the lives of my neighbours has been felt by me to give a worth and dignity to my own life which it would not otherwise have possessed.

The publication in this volume of some of the sermons, by means of which I have striven to achieve this result, owes its origin partly to the suggestion of a much valued friend who, during the summer of 1868, was one of my hearers in Preeshenlle Chapel, and partly to a desire, not unnatural on my part, to gather up and embody in a permanent form the substance of my teaching during five and twenty years of this kind of Christian service.

This mention of a quarter of a century spent in teaching religious truth will show, that, whatever judgment may be passed upon the opinions expressed in this book, those opinions have not been hastily formed. Neither have they been expressed in ignorance of the thought and questionings which have been seething and surging on every side during the greater portion of that period. On the contrary, I have followed each of the great avenues of that thought and speculation to, what has appeared to me to be, its land's end, its legitimate conclusion. I have found one leading by a swift but fascinating descent to blank unbelief, to dire and utter despair. I have found another leading through showy rites and gorgeous ceremonies, and through the worship of a sentimental symbolism, to an abject submission to priestly authority, and to an idolatry most debasing and mischievous. And I have seen yet another which, in its efforts to preserve the Gospel of the grace of God within its borders, has so made it to bristle with legal terms and logical definitions as to cause poor souls seeking forgiveness and rest to turn away in disappointment and grief. I have come back from all these weary wanderings resolved more and more to preach

A simple Christ to simple men.

I have sought to show that underneath most of the doctrines termed evangelical there lies a philosophical truth, which has its roots in the constitution and consciousness of our nature, and is firmly placed amidst that orderly law with which God governs the world. I have so sought to

place these truths before our village congregations that, as the younger members of them have departed, as they are constantly doing, to take up positions in large towns in our own country or beyond the seas, they might have nothing to unlearn, nay more, they might be prepared to cherish and defend a religion which had commended itself no less to the understanding than to their heart. I have sought to "warn every man and to teach every man in all wisdom." I have striven that each member of the congregations, from the simplest to the most thoughtful of them, might be "settled, strengthened, stablished in the faith." How far I have succeeded in doing this it is not for me to say. To those who have listened to them, the sermons in this book will come back as old friends with familiar faces. Of those who may look upon them for the first time as strangers, I would simply bespeak the consideration that is due to thoughts redeemed from the midst of a busy life amongst men.

Oswestry, September 13th, 1871.

SERMON I.

THE CHRIST FOR ALL THE AGES.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”

HEBREWS 13, 8.

It is generally supposed that this letter to the Hebrews was written by the Apostle Paul; although there have not been wanting those who have thought, that, in the close familiarity displayed by the writer with Old Testament rites, and ceremonial observances, they have discerned the eloquent pen of the Apollos, who was mighty in the Jewish Scriptures.

Whoever the writer was, his object seems to have been, the exaltation of the person of Jesus Christ above that of the highest of ancient Jewish Priests, and the exaltation of His sacrificial and mediatorial work for man above that of all former priests whatsoever; and further to show, that, foreshadowy and temporary in their nature, as well as limited in their influence, the rites and ceremonies of the Old Jewish religion must disappear for ever at the advent of Him, who was at once the offering and the priest: even as the stars that herald the dawn, fade and melt into the brighter light of day.

This truth, which is so elaborately argued throughout the whole of the epistle, is summed up by way of implication, in the words of the text; which you may regard as an independent proposition, a sudden flash of inspiration on the mind of the writer, a grand conception of the whole truth, standing by itself, as Breidden Hill rises abruptly from the plain of the Severn. Or, without doing violence to the context, you may regard the words as linked by an under-current of thought, with the exhortation of the preceding verse, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever:"—just as the hill I have named is connected by rocks underground with the neighbouring mountains of Wales.

Whichever way we take the words, the doctrine contained in them is the same, and it is this:—

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME THROUGHOUT ALL THE AGES.

I.—In endeavouring to open and illustrate this doctrine, let us try, first of all, to gain some conception of the *infinitude of time*, implied in the words of the text.

In attempting to form some idea of the time that is past, the yesterday of our own lives, we have to wake up our power of memory. But even this of itself is insufficient, for, while we have a pretty full and accurate recollection of all that happened yesterday, many things which formed part of our lives at the beginning of the week, have quite faded out of our remembrance. We must, therefore, if we would gain a true conception of the whole yesterday of our lives, have recourse to notes and memoranda. In like manner, if we

would call up before our eyes the history of the world, we must have recourse to the notes and observations made by those who have lived before us ; and thus the history of the nations, as far as it goes, may help us to form a conception of the extent of the yesterday of the world. We may begin with the history of our own country and follow it backwards for about two thousand years, when we shall find ourselves confronted with our half-barbarous ancestors, but we shall also find existing by the side of them the civilization of Rome. We may at this point take up the history of the latter, and trace it to its first faint beginnings on the banks of the Tiber. There, we shall find ourselves contemporary with the Greeks, a people already wise and learned. We follow their story backwards, until it fades in myth and tradition. But then we shall have reached the Egyptian monarchy and civilization, the oldest in the world. This, too, becomes dim and shadowy as we trace its history backwards ; until at last, we are confined to the early story of the beginnings of the race, as this is told in the Bible. But beyond this period there stretches an inconceivable length of time, cycling backwards, and chronicled by the remains of successive races of creatures, whose remains we find entombed in the rocks, and which are to us the buried monuments of past creations. We go back in thought through all these successive periods, until reaching the utmost verge and limit of creation ; we stand alone in thought with God, whom we conceive of, as then complete in the fulness of His own existence.

Or from this present moment of time, we may travel in like manner through the *for-ever* of which the text speaks.

We may, judging from the past, imagine the growth, the manhood, and the decay of nations. We may conceive of the formation of new kingdoms out of the ruins of the old, and of the final absorption of all, into the abiding kingdom of God. We may stretch our thoughts to that still more distant event to which science points, and of which revelation speaks, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and "the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up," in order to the bringing in of the new heavens and the new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell.

The text speaks also of "to-day,"—the present, with its ever-shifting scenes, and ever-varying needs. We often make a distinction between time and eternity. We speak of time as that which comes to an end; but eternity never. This is an artificial distinction. Really no such distinction exists. Eternity is time—time past and time to come. Time is to us that part of the one vast eternity in which we live here. We separate this portion from the rest in our ordinary speech. We measure and mark it by days and years, but time pauses not for a second at any such divisions. It moves with equal and sure precision always, and everywhere. The rapidity or slowness of its flight belong not to changes in it, but to different conditions of our own minds. Yet it is oftentimes convenient and beneficial for us to make such distinctions, and to note how to each of us, and to each successive generation of men, and to the human race collectively, the yesterday—the eternity of the past—apparently in-

creases in length, as it absorbs through the present moments the to-day—the eternity of the future—the for-ever which lies before it, though we cannot say that, that for-ever is the least shortened by the process. We are conscious of this process ; we count the hours and number the days. A considerable portion of our lives has already passed into that yesterday ; is even now passing. We scarcely realize the present moment before it passes by, carrying along with it our impressions, our deeds, and our history. Thus, while I now speak to you, half-past seven o'clock is a period of time which lies in the forever ; but before I have done speaking, it will belong to the irrecoverable yesterday of the past.

II.—Let us endeavour to understand how, in all the essential characteristics of His nature, as these were manifested in the days of His flesh, Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, was the same, through all the infinite past, and will be the same, through all the infinite future.

You will at once see, that to accept this statement in its fulness, we must cherish a very exalted conception of our Lord's nature. We must think of Him as something more than a man, or a man at the head of men. We must regard Him as higher than a prophet, or even than a prophet standing at the top of a pyramid of prophets. We must think of Him as originally one in essence with the Father ; as assuming before all creation a separate existence, or power of manifestation, as the Son of God ; as becoming to the fathers and founders of our race, in various guises, the manifestation of God ; “ the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature :” and finally,

in the fulness of time as born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law. To me, there is nothing startling or incredible, in all this. Below me I see a regular gradation of creatures, who form a series of connecting links between the highest mind of man, and the dead matter of which the earth is made. Need I wonder therefore, if above me there should be like gradations? Nay, does it not seem likely, reasoning from what we know, that there should be such gradations? I do indeed see some of these. I see and I have read of men, in whom there were evidently concentrated, more than the usual number of the rays of Divinity. They stand apart from, and above their fellow-men, as mountains whose tops seem to touch heaven. I am not surprised, therefore, when I read in the Scriptures of ONE who unites in Himself the Human and the Divine; and who is the last and uppermost link of the chain that binds all creation, with man and angels at its head, to its Almighty Maker and God.

Looking at the Lord Jesus Christ as He appeared on the earth, we see in Him the manifestation of the Wisdom, the Power, and the Goodness of the Deity. We hear the wisdom of the Godhead in those words, which, though, comparatively few in number, yet contain the very quintessence of the wisdom man most needs to know. We see the divine power revealing itself in the spiritual power displayed by Jesus over men's minds; and, though there are those who find a difficulty in believing either the reality of, or the necessity for, those extraordinary events which we call miracles, still, it seems to me but right to

expect, that He who came professedly from the Father ; who claimed for Himself all power, should thus assert before men the supremacy of mind over matter, and the power of God over the works of His hand ; especially if this could be done, as I believe it could, in harmony with the great and orderly plan by which God governs nature. Then, last and greatest in this trinity of Divine attributes, do we not in the life of self-sacrifice, in the tender words, in the benevolent deeds, in the sympathy with human sorrow, in the sadness over human sin, in the anguish of the garden, and in the humiliation and death upon the cross, behold the depth of the love of God's heart for His sinning and suffering children ? Now, if from the period of our Lord's earthly life, we again throw our thoughts into that immensely distant past, when, as St. Paul tells the Colossians, " By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible," we shall, I think, see these characteristics in full action :—the power that made these mighty orbs, and sent them rolling through space ; the wisdom that framed the laws by which they are governed, and which they may not by a hair's breadth transgress ; and the goodness which covered this earth with rich and varied fulness, before it was given to the children of men. Again, if from the same period of our Lord's earthly life, we throw our thoughts forward to the final heavenly glory, as that is indicated in the Scriptures, we shall see in even a brighter and tenderer light the same characteristics of His nature :—the power that has triumphed over every foe ; the wisdom which has adapted the heavenly state to meet the manifold require-

ments of man's complete nature; and the love which has even its own full volume increased, as it looks upon the happiness of its redeemed creatures.

Let us, however, now, limit our vision to the region of history, and think, for a while, of the abidingness of Jesus Christ, in those various guises, as I have called them, in which He, as the image of the invisible God, has at various times made Himself known to the children of men. In early times God was revealed to the Patriarchs as the Angel of the Covenant, their constant friend, entering their tents, holding converse with them, interested in the story of their needs, directing their steps, and assuring them of the constancy of His presence. Jesus Christ came fulfilling the same character. "I have not called you servants, but friends," He said to His disciples. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." And still is He the friend of His people, bearing the same character to-day as when as the Angel of the Covenant He sojourned in patriarchal tents. Anticipating His own departure He said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." By the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, He still abides the friend and companion of His people, fulfilling His own words which he spake, not to a privileged class alone, but to every believer, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Not less in earlier times, was God known as the SHEPHERD of His people, "Who led his people as a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron"; of whom the Psalmist

spoke, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want"; and of whose tender care the prophet Isaiah could say, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead them which are with young." Jesus Christ came taking upon him this ancient and tender relationship. You remember his words, "I am the Good Shepherd, and the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." And still is He the leader and guide of faithful souls, saying to His servants "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs." Whom the writer of this epistle calls "Our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep," and of whom he speaks under another figure which implies the same idea, as "The Captain of our salvation," who made perfect through suffering is ever bringing many sons unto glory. Then, in the indications we have in Scripture of the heavenly glory, the Lord Jesus is represented as sustaining the same character there—The Lamb who is in the midst of the Throne, leads those who are fresh from the sins and sufferings of earth, to living fountains of water, where He graciously wipes all tears—the last traces of earthly sorrow and sin—from their eyes.

Then, in the Old Testament we meet, as you know, with an elaborate ritual, with its Priests and Sacrifices. Not that priests and sacrifices are confined to the Old Testament histories. We meet with them everywhere. Hence I take their presence and practice, in all lands and through all time, as the universal outward expression of a feeling which lies deep in the hearts of men, that there is a disturbance in man's relation towards God. Nor are they less

an acknowledgment, on man's part, that God has a right, not only to what a man is, but also to what a man has. Now if there is any meaning in the language of the New Testament, this elaborate Jewish ritual (and I would even go so far as to say that, unconsciously perhaps, but yet really, every other ritual and sacrifice), pointed towards and received its completion in Him, "who, His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," and who, having ascended up on high, has received gifts for men, who is thus by His own self-sacrificing life and death, the all-sufficient and ever-prevailing sacrifice for sin; and who, having passed into the heavens, has become the great and perpetual high priest of humanity; of whom each generation of men and women can say, "He is in the presence of God for us."

Once more, by the old prophets the expected Messiah was announced as a Deliverer. Thus the prophet Isaiah writes, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Need I remind you how, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus, after He had read these words, said to His hearers, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Or how, throughout the whole of that brief life, in gentle words, in gracious deeds, and in the life given as a ransom for many, the same scripture was daily fulfilled. And where my hearers, can men to-day, who are fast bound in sin, find deliverance and peace through pardon, but in Jesus Christ? The dying thief

prayed, saying, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy kingdom," and the gracious answer was "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Hear the cry of a different man, the jailer at Phillippi, as in the midst of terror he asks, "What must I do to be saved?" He was directed to Christ. Whether his fears are few or many, he is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that he may be saved. Let us now skip the intervening centuries, and imagine yourselves standing with me by the side of the beautiful river Neckar, before it flows into the Rhine. We enter a house where a man lies dying. He is the Baron Bunsen, a man of great learning and much thought, a man justly esteemed, for the breadth and height of his attainments, throughout the whole of Europe. Listen to his dying utterance—"I see Christ, and I see through Christ, God." "Christ must become all in all." "Christ is the Son of God, and we are only then His sons if the spirit of love which was in Christ be also in us." Thus did these men, living so widely apart, and separated not more by time, than by differences of moral condition, and intellectual culture, all find rest in the hour of their need in the same Saviour.

III.—I may now proceed to consider an objection which may, and with some show of fairness too, be urged against the doctrine of the text. It is this. How can an unchangeable Christ, and a stereotyped religion, meet the ever-shifting needs of an ever-changing world? The world outgrows its theories of science and of philosophy. May it not equally outgrow its religion? It is making rapid strides in the arts and appliances of civilization, and is it

reasonable to suppose that the religion which suited an eastern people, two thousand years ago, is equally suitable to the western nations, in the midst of the progress of the nineteenth century ?

To these questions I reply, first, that man's inmost and deepest needs remain ever the same, however much the circumstances which surround him may alter. In order to make this plain, let us imagine that we simple country people found ourselves to-morrow in the midst of London. We should marvel at the length and richness of many of its streets, and at the magnificence of its buildings. And as we entered, one after another, its places of amusement, its brilliantly-lighted assemblies ; as we visited its museums and abodes of science ; as we listened wonderingly to the eloquence of statesmen who gather there, we might ask ourselves—Do these people need the teachings, the comforts, the hopes and of that simple gospel to which in the midst of our village homes we listen week by week ? Wait and see. Wait until the shops are closed, the halls deserted, the voices silent, the lights put out. Follow these people to their homes, to the solitude of their own rooms, and in those moments of sober thought which come at times to the gayest and most thoughtless,—what are the questions which agitate and perplex them ? Are they not these—the same as those which most press upon you ?—What am I ? Whence came I ? Whither am I going ? After death, what then ? I have sinned, not only against law which I see on every side of me, and which ministers tell me is written in God's Word, but I have also sinned against my own sense of right. I am self-condemned.

How may I be forgiven, consistently with my own sense of justice and truth? How may the past, with all its sins, be blotted out? These, my hearers, with similar questionings, are those which, I venture to say, trouble men there, as I hope they trouble you here. On what side may men listen for an answer? Who has ever come from the other side? Who that has looked upon the face of God, and has been deep in His secrets, has ever spoken to the children of men? Who has lifted up, even though it be but by a corner, the impenetrable veil that separates us from the unseen? Who has spoken with authority to forgive sin, with no sin of his own, and yet with tender pity for the sinning? Who, indeed, except the Lord Jesus Christ? Accepting Him as the Saviour of men, these questions are answered and these problems are solved. Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, may, as we have seen, safely rely on God's mercy, as it is manifested through Him.

To the same objections I would reply, secondly, that there is an expansive power in Christianity, which comprehends, and encircles, all the progressive requirements of the human race. The ancient Greeks were used to think that the dome of sky above their heads was a solid firmament, dotted with crystal spheres, in which the stars twinkled and shone. We know that modern science has dissipated this notion, and, that it has revealed to us world after world, and systems of worlds, distant and yet more distant, revolving around their suns, and altogether, it may be, whirling in space around some common centre. Let it be so. Still there was truth in the old idea of an

encircling dome. For, multiply the vastest distance ever conceived by an astronomer, ten thousand thousand times, and you do but increase the encircling circumference of space, in which planets and systems all move. The Creator's wisdom, power, and love still surround and comprehend them all. In like manner as human needs and conditions of society increase, alter, and diverge, they cannot outgrow the all comprehending and ever expanding provisions of Christianity. Let poets utter their deepest and grandest inspirations; the poetry which gathers around the life and death of Jesus Christ will never become obsolete, linked as it is with man's holiest and tenderest feelings and hopes. That story must ever inspire in the future, as it has in the past, some of the most sublime and tender utterances of the best of men. Let human refinement grow as much as it may, Christian gentleness, courtesy, and self-denial, must ever be its highest manifestations. Nay, with so many evidences as we have about us, that human civilization of itself, is but a very thin encrustation over the barbarity, and cruelty, and gross sensualism which lurk within our nature, do we not feel that human society, in its most advanced state, needs the Christian element as salt to preserve it from corruption? Human systems of morality can never go beyond the Christian summary of the law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Let science advance as much as it may, startling the world with its new discoveries, and I for one glory in all true progress which it makes; still the Christ in whom we believe, gathers into himself and per-

sonifies the wondrous power, and wisdom, and love, which each such discovery reveals.

Let us in conclusion, consider just for a moment the assurance the text conveys to us, of the final triumph of Christianity. Perverted forms of it may perish. Human notions concerning it may be falsified. The buttresses by means of which men in the weakness of their faith have sought to support it may be swept away. Little causes may come to an end. Systems of religion once most popular, having served their purpose may fail. But Christianity itself, as the manifestation of the righteousness, love, and wisdom of God, shall be as enduring as those attributes of God themselves. The primal message of Christianity, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will towards men," must go on fulfilling itself until the Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ.

SERMON II.

THE MIRRORED GLORY OF THE LORD.

“But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*”

II CORINTHIANS, iii, 18.

THERE is a reference throughout the whole of this chapter, to the giving forth of the Law by Moses, under the shadow of Mount Sinai; the particulars of which you will find in the thirty-third chapter of the book of Exodus. The Apostle makes four sets of contrasts between this ancient giving of the Law, and the bringing in of the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ. There is first, the contrast between the Law of God, as written with an iron pen on tablets of stone—liable to be broken, to be fretted and worn by time, to become effaced by the wear and tear of ages; and the Law of God written by the spirit of love, on indestructible human spirits, and known and read of all men in pure and holy lives. There is, secondly, the contrast between the Law given by Moses, fenced round about as it was, by pains and penalties; a ministration of death; and the Law manifested in Christ sending its roots into and drawing its power from grateful hearts; a ministration of righteousness.

There is, thirdly, the contrast between the temporary and evanescent glory of all the Jewish surroundings of the old Law, which were to serve the purpose of ushering in something better, and the abidingness of that better manifestation of righteousness revealed by Jesus Christ. And, fourthly, there is a contrast between the way in which the ancient Jew looked at the glory of his old Law, with his face covered, his eyes darkened, even as Moses had veiled his face before the Israelites could look upon the glory of God ("under whose feet there was as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness") as this reflected glory shone in the face of His servant, on his return from the mount; and the open unveiled face, with which Christians were permitted to see the glory of God, as it shone in the face of Jesus Christ. We may therefore from the text learn—

I.—That Christ's glory is mirrored in the Scriptures. It is the glory of the Lord of which the text speaks. The glory of God the Father is seen everywhere. All His works praise him. Nor can we separate this glory entirely from the glory of the Lord here spoken of, inasmuch as in Christ we see the brightness of the Father's glory. But it is this peculiar, this tender and benevolent aspect of the Divine glory, on which we have to fix our eyes to day, as mirrored in the Scriptures. Now, in uttering these last words, I am not unaware, that there is some difficulty in the way of accepting them as the true meaning of the text. Luther in his German version of the text, renders it "And now mirrors itself in us all, the glory of the Lord." He thus makes believers the mirror in which is seen the reflected glory of

the Lord. Doubtless this is a truth, but it is not, I think, the truth expressed in the text. For how by contemplating ourselves, how by beholding within us a glory, even though it be the glory of another, can we be changed into a higher degree of glory? The mirror is outside of us somewhere, not inside. There is also another difficulty. At the time these words were written, a part of the Scriptures, the New Testament, did not exist as a book, some of the gospels even were not written until a long time afterwards. What the early Christians knew of Jesus, they learned from the discourses, sayings, and letters of the various ministers of the Lord. Still this difficulty is more apparent than real, and is less than others which would confront us under any other interpretation. The different parts of the book were rapidly growing up in the minds and writings of the Apostles. Christ was the substance of every discourse, the burden of every song, the uppermost thought in every mind, and in each one of these, as in a fragment of a mirror, was Christ seen in some phase of His life, and in some aspect of His death.

You are familiar with the figure used, it relates to something in actual use to day. Behind the flame in the railway lamp, a reflector of polished metal is placed in which are collected the diverging rays of light, which from the polished surface, are thrown back with concentrated and intensified brightness into the darkness. In the lighthouses which surround our dangerous coasts, great care and skill is used in the construction of these reflectors, so that every ray may be united into one great flood of light which is to be thrown over the dreary waste of

waters. In like manner, in the Scriptures, the gathered glory of the Lord is thrown back upon the beholder, who thus becomes covered with the light in which he stands. Nor is this all, there is the idea of distinctness, as well as of effulgence of glory. Just as in sailing over an Alpine lake, you see mirrored in its clear waters, the mountains, villages, and houses surrounding it, or in a mirror on the wall of a room, you see a distinct reflection of the people and furniture it contains ; so in the Scriptures, we see vividly and distinctly portrayed the glory of the Lord.

He is shown there on all sides of His character, and in every aspect of His work for man. When you look into a stereoscope, you see the objects in the picture, the men and women, the trees, houses, and mountains, all standing out solidly as they do in nature. This is so, because there are two pictures of the object, which have been taken at different angles of light, from different points of view, and which have now become merged into one. Now in the Scriptures, as we have them, we see Jesus Christ from almost every point of view. There are four accounts of the one life, given by men who looked at Him somewhat differently, and who each describe that life to us, so that the rays of light passing through different minds, might form a stereoscopic picture of the Lord. The result is as you know: a character and life unique, standing alone in human history, full of strange contrasts, yet such contrasts as while we look, blend in perfect harmony of colour. Think of it for a moment. Look at Jesus, transparently pure in thought and deed ; yet ungodly men, and fallen women, gather about Him and love to listen to his words. Powerful by virtue

of the Divinity within Him, hushing the howling winds, and calming down the fury of the waves : yet suffering hunger and weariness, and fainting under the burden of His own cross. Lowly and unpretending, one " who did not strive or cry, or lift up His voice in the streets : " yet aspiring to nothing short of universal dominion. Flashing forth at times a Divine glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father : yet a gracious glory, seen chiefly here, in pity, suffering, and in death.

II.—The Lord's glory is mirrored in the Scripture for *our contemplation*. " We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Let us, then, briefly enquire into the manner in which we should behold this glory ; in which we should enquire what the Scriptures say of Christ. And, first, we should enquire thoughtfully and intelligently. The Scriptures were written for men, not for machines ; for men as God has made them—endowed with reason, with imagination, with understanding, with many and widely varying powers. We should therefore do dishonour to our Maker, to ourselves, as well as to the Scriptures, if we accepted them with unquestioning submission ; if we did not bring to the study of them, all our powers in their best condition. This, indeed, is the spirit in which they themselves invite us to their study. " Prove all things," is the Apostolic injunction. " Search the Scriptures," is the command of the Lord Himself. We are thus, in plain English, to read our Bibles, and to read them in an enquiring, thoughtful spirit. We are to read the Old Testament Scriptures, that we may gather from them, their testimony to the

needed character and work of an expected Messiah. And while, in time past, there may have been an unjustifiable multiplying of types, and an unwarrantable application of some prophecies, as well as a mischievous degree of spiritualizing of the lives of persons, the stories of family life, and of incidents recorded in Old Testament history ; we shall nevertheless feel, that the life and death of Jesus Christ, the advent of the Son of Man, is an event of such magnitude in the world's history, and has been fraught with such consequences to the human race, that we may reasonably expect, to find interwoven with the world's previous history, expectations, foreshadowings, and premonitions of such an event, and of such a life ; especially in the books of the race to which He belonged, and amongst the outpourings of human minds most in sympathy with goodness, and much in communion with God. We shall therefore, as we start from the life of Jesus on the earth, and follow the stream of inspiration backwards through time, as we would a river to its sources among the hills ; following its threads amidst mountains of Jewish history, into still valleys of family life, around bold headlands of personal adventure, amidst weird regions where dwell seers and prophets, through apparently barren wastes of genealogical lists of names ; expect at every step to find traces and intimations of that life ; to discern in the longing of single human souls for deliverance from sin, for rest from passion ; to see in the religious rites and observances of nations, in the expectant, though often hazy and indistinct gaze of prophet, and seer, foretellings of the great Deliverer, the Desired of all the nations : just as amidst the creatures

which peopled the earth in the distant past, we discover the rudimentary forms of beings, which stand at the head of Creation to-day. We shall then thoughtfully turn to the New Testament, that we may see how the Lord's actual life, and character, and claims, answered to the expectations, and fulfilled the hopes of former ages. Nor should we be anything loth to follow that life forward, along the stream of time, and to note its influence upon all succeeding generations of men and women, as the centre of holy love, the spring of self-denying effort, and to see in it the life in which innumerable other lives are bound, and by which they are influenced for good. Secondly: We should look at the mirrored glory of the Lord reverently. Conscious of the limitation of even the best developed human powers, we should seek the aid of the all-informing Spirit of God, in order to rightly understand truths, the beginning and the ending, and the wide-spread influences of which, lie beyond the range of human vision. Nor should we fail to cherish a sympathetic reverence for goodness. Supposing we were about to study the character of Jesus Christ for the first time, it would, I think, only be fair and just on our part to say—"Now I will gladly esteem, admire, and love all that is noble, all that is good, all that is amiable and benevolent in this life." Yet how often do men approach the contemplation of the life of Christ, with less of reverence and sympathy, than they approach the study of the life of Plato, of Milton, or of Shakspeare. The consequence is, they often misunderstand it. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? They are out of sympathy with it. They know but little often of the depth of benevolent love,

or of the fire of heavenly enthusiasm ; and we need not wonder, therefore, if the Christ of whom they write, is more the projection of their own cold suspicions, than Him of whom we read in the gospels, as the Saviour human souls need. Thirdly : We must look into the mirror, in which the glory of the Lord is to be seen, *ourselves*. The Scriptures speak of themselves as an open book. The Bereans were commended because they did not yield blind submission to even the words of an apostle. In the text, the true privilege of the Christian believer is set in strong contrast to the position of the Jew towards his own Scriptures. He had woven a veil of authority and tradition which he placed between himself and the word. We therefore are not to look at these writings through the eyes of priest, or minister, or commentator ; but to say, with all the due respect the character and vocation of such men require—Stand aside ; stand out of the light ; let me look at the glory for myself. Our anxiety should not be, to harmonize the Scriptures with the various theologies, or creeds, or catechisms, or sermons of men ; but to ascertain how far these agree with it. In saying this, I do not undervalue human helps to the study of the Bible ; much less would I advocate the isolation of each enquiring soul from all other such souls. On the contrary, I feel that we cannot afford to reject the experience and discoveries of the past, and to begin each of us anew and unaided in the search after truth. All I say is this, and I do say it most earnestly : While we value all human aids for what they are worth, and accept of whatever pure light they throw upon the Word and the Life, we must not permit them to

stand between us and it. We must with open, with unveiled face, behold for ourselves the glory of the Lord. It is sad to think how many there are who must, from their lack of early educational advantages, be compelled to take their religious knowledge second-hand; but even these are bound to use their judgment, to compare spirit with spirit, statement with statement, and to see how what is told them fits into the needs of their souls, that so they may arrive at as correct a conclusion, as is possible under the circumstances, concerning the truthfulness of what they are taught.

III.—Let us now consider for a while the transforming effect of the vision. “We all * * * are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” This change is effected partly by the power of imitation, which is inherent in our nature. As children imitate their parents, as younger children copy the example of those who are older, as we cannot long be in constant companionship with persons, without copying, unconsciously even, their manner, their tone of voice, the very expression of their face, their peculiarities and oddities perhaps; so we by the beholding of the Lord’s character, by close companionship with Christ in His word, become changed into His image. But added to this force of imitation, and greatly increasing its power, is the force of loving admiration. We more rapidly copy those we admire, and seek to possess ourselves the excellencies we esteem in them. Now the “we” whom the Apostle describes as beholding the glory of the Lord is made up of those who admire the Saviour, and who, as they look steadfastly at their Lord, derive his

humility, his unselfishness, his pure benevolent love, his holy zeal. As they have received the Lord Jesus, so they walk in Him ; they become covered with His light, suffused and permeated by His warmth ; the icy selfishness of their nature thaws ; they become fertilized by His spirit, and become fruitful in every good word and work ; the wilderness of their heart is turned into a fruitful field. Even as with the increasing power of the sun's rays in Spring, the earth loses her cheerless and desolate aspect, becomes covered with her garment of green, her adornment of beautiful colours, and becomes peopled with myriad tribes of warm and sentient life.

And the glory, according to the text, is progressive, as it is everywhere else in the Scripture stated to be. It is the glory of the sun, that shines more and more unto the perfect day ; it is the increasing strength of those who go from strength to strength ; it is the advancement of those who do not consider themselves to have attained to the true ideal of perfection, but go on according as they have already attained, following the same rule, minding the same thing. We are changed from glory to glory, from one degree of transparent purity into another, until in heaven we reach God's ideal of our true and ultimate life. For then shall the transformation be quite complete when we are made like Him, because we see Him as He is.

IV.—I must say a few words in conclusion, concerning the Transforming Operator—" Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The mind of man is constantly represented in the Scriptures as receiving all that ennobles it, and dis-

tinguishes it from the lower creation, from its contact with the Divine Spirit. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding" is one of the earliest recorded utterances of the race. It was therefore in accordance with this general truth, that our Lord spoke of the Spirit of God, the Divine Comforter, as the Spirit of Truth leading Christ's servants into all truth, His special office for them being, to take of the things of Christ and shew these unto them. In our text also, as well as throughout the whole of the Apostolic writings, His agency is recognized. We know so little of the real nature of mind, or of the way in which a purely spiritual being may operate upon an embodied soul, that we cannot give a full answer as to the way in which the Divine Spirit operates upon the human spirit consistently with the free agency and responsibility of the latter. But we know enough, I think, to enable us to conclude that He is not confined to one mode of working. In times past theologians have drawn a straight line, and have said, "On this side of the line is dead human nature; hopelessly dead, morally and spiritually; and on this side of the line is the living Spirit of God; and now and then He comes across this line and puts life into such of these souls as it pleases Him. He does this also in one way according to a single pattern." It is a wonder to me how such a limited notion of the Divine power and modes of working, ever entered a human mind. Apart from the error of supposing God feels honoured by their depreciation of that, which on earth most nearly resembles Him, and, with all its blemishes and sins, most fitly represents the Godhead here; how

dare men presume to tie up the Divine hands, and limit the methods of Divine operation in such a manner as they would resent with indignation if applied to themselves. Let us, my hearers, rather gladly suppose that God varies his mode of working, and the means He adopts, as infinitely as are the diverse needs of individual human souls, according as these may be affected by bodily organization, surrounding circumstances, education, and training. That we need the help of a power superior to our own, none of us, I hope, will deny. We need to be made receptive of the light which radiates from the glory of the Lord. As the photographer by careful manipulation, and the use of delicate chemicals, makes the plate of glass sensitive of light and form, and able to retain the impressions made upon it, so does the Spirit of God operate on our spirits, making them susceptible of holy impressions and influences. If we stood before a fire with our bodies encased in a covering of polished steel, we should be a long time in getting warm; the bright metal would throw back the light and the warmth. Now, the Spirit of God strips us of this covering, dissolves our cold casing of self-righteousness, in order that the light and warmth of the Cross—the glory of the Lord, may suffuse and permeate our whole nature; may kindle within our hearts a glow of holy, fervent love. Nor is there a time in our history when we can afford to do without His help. I have spoken of Christian progress, of the glory changing into a higher glory, but we all know that there is an opposite tendency within us, an earthward progress to which we are prone. Especially as we advance in life does the love of ease, and of

inhalgence. grow upon us, almost of necessity, from the very nature of the matter of which our bodies are composed. More and more difficult do we find it, to overcome the tendency to rest, and to ease, which grows upon us. Hence the too frequent cooling of our love, our many excuses for refraining from Christian work, the ease with which we fall into temptation and forgetfulness of God. Who amongst us does not, therefore, feel the need there is, that the fire of love, of holiness, of zeal, should be constantly fed by an unseen hand, like the fire which Christian saw in the house of the Interpreter. Who amongst us does not feel, that if we would mount on wings as eagles, would run and not be weary, would walk and not faint, it must be by waiting on the Lord. Or that if we would, as we advance in life, advance also in spirituality, be changed from glory to glory, it must be "Even by the Spirit of the Lord."

SERMON III.

REST IN CHRIST FOR WEARY SOULS.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

MATTHEW XI. 28.

If we were at all uncertain, whether these words of our Lord naturally grew out of the assertion of Divine power and knowledge which He had just made, or were simply prompted on some other occasion by the signs of human weariness he saw around Him ; it would be sufficient for us to remember that, while they were, without doubt, called forth by the sight of faces clouded with sadness and furrowed with the deep lines of thought and anxiety, and by the aspect of countenances marred and darkened by sin, which crowded about the Saviour ; He could not have chosen a better time in which to utter the gracious invitation of the text, than that in which He laid claim, before people who had seen His works, and who knew His manner of life, to complete oneness with God the Father of men, in power and wisdom, in sympathy and love. Full of the power which was able to give rest, and full of the love which yearned to bless, both of which He possessed in common with the Father ; He turned to the burdened souls about Him and said, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

Bearing in mind the circumstances, under which the

words were spoken, and the conscious power with which they were uttered, let us think awhile :—

I.—Of the need there was, and is, for the gracious invitation contained in the words of the text. It was addressed to the labouring, the struggling, those ready to faint under the burden ; in other words—the weary. Let us take the words as interchangeable. Weariness needs rest. There were many weary souls about the Lord. Souls weary of religious rites and endless ceremonial observances ; who felt that in these alone there was nothing to satisfy the cravings of the soul after holiness, and nothing wherewith to satisfy their finest conceptions of righteousness ; and that if this were so, how much less would the perfect righteousness of Jehovah be satisfied with “ thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil ?” As the very opposite of these, there were souls earnestly trying to satisfy their tender consciences, by endeavouring to fulfil the requirement of the Lord, uttered by the voice of his ancient prophet, to “ do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God ;” but who tried alas, in vain, because they found their best endeavours falling far below the approval of even their own consciences, to say nothing of the perfect law of God ; and who in very despair would come near to Jesus and say, “ Master, what good thing must we do to inherit eternal life ?” Souls, too, there were, wandering in the mazes of doubt and unbelief, like a melancholy man amidst the tombs ; who must have felt that in persuading themselves there was neither “ angel, nor spirit, nor resurrection,” they had discovered also, that their present existence was a mistake, was not worth having ; that better far would it have been for them, if

happiness was what they sought, if they had been born beasts of the forest, or birds of the air. And struggling souls were there, who waged a fierce warfare with sin, but who often were worsted in the conflict; were torn of evil spirits, and were cast down by the devil;—souls weary of the conflict, yet as weary of the dominion of animal passions and coarser sins. Then if we add to this crowd of sinners the weak and fallen women, who, scouted and despised by their own sisters, heard kindly words from Christ alone, together with the many who were weary of the strife and conflict of the sects, who were weary and sick of the world's work, and disappointment, and pain, and woe; the picture will be complete of the sinful, suffering, weary crowd, which thronged about the Lord, and to whom in His tender pity He turned and said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What was the wail of all this sorrow, my hearers, but the echo of the wail of the past ages? Listen to the cry of the patriarch Job: "Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow;" or to the moaning of the Hebrew psalmist and king: "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest;" "My soul is weary of my life:" or to the experience of his more worldly-wise son, who had made to himself great works, had builded houses, and had planted vineyards: who had gotten him servants and maidens: who had gathered to himself silver and gold, men singers and women singers, and all the delights of the children of men: as, in his humiliation and disappointment, he cries: "Vanity of

vanities, all is vanity :” “ In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth in knowledge increaseth in sorrow.” Has the cry ceased ? Are there no heavy-laden hearts now ? Alas, my hearers ! who can count how many sad, weary, heavily-burdened hearts there are upon whom the light of to-day has fallen ? Who can number the wronged, the down-trodden, and the oppressed amongst the nations ? How many souls are there sick, and sorely weary of the faithlessness of the world, and of the disappointments and sorrows of life ; out of whose life there has been taken, by bereavement and loss, the song and the joy, and who, heart-broken and faint, say—

I am dreary, out-worn, weary,
And my heart is cold and frozen,
Sighing for eternal rest ?

Souls there are weary of the monotony of the ordinary work of life. Souls fretting themselves away in the midst of uncongenial toil. Souls burdened with too much knowledge ; meddling with things too high for them ; burning out their bodily strength by the fierceness and intensity of their intellectual life ; beating themselves against the rock-like walls which shut them in at last, and bar their further progress on every side ; as an eagle would chafe and tear its wings against the iron bars of its cage. Souls struggling with sin, and wearying of the conflict. And souls seeking a secure resting-place from the remorse of the past, and from the anticipations of the future : repeating with increased earnestness, the cry which comes to us from far-off times, “ How should a man be just with God ?” Need I

say any more to show you how sore the need was, and is, for the gracious invitation, and promise, of the text ?

II.—If we were to enquire more particularly into the causes of this restless weariness amongst men, we should, I think, find that it is due, first, to the very constitution of man's nature, combined with the position he occupies in creation. Two orders of being meet within him. He stands at the head of all the lower creation—the connecting link between them and that thought, intelligence, and will, from which they have all sprung, and which ever shapes their destinies. Hence there are within him desires, tempers, instincts, and passions which he has in common with simple animal life below him. He has also will, thought, intelligence, and moral sense which unite him to that higher order of life, and by which he is intended to rule and guide his lower instincts, for his own true welfare, and for the glory of God. Hence arises a struggle—a fierce conflict, in which too many, alas ! fall under the almost undisputed sway of their animal nature. Almost, I say : for those higher principles of life will assert their existence, and will not let even the lowest man sin as he likes. There is thus, even in the unregenerate soul, a war in the members ; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Nor is this higher nature in man what it ought to be. Far from it. I think we must all be painfully conscious that there is something within our spiritual nature which makes a dissonance in its music—a grating and jar in the movements of its machinery. Our sense of right and wrong is not so keen and unbiassed as it might be. It is too often

warped by our inclinations. And then how much self-righteousness, and exaltation of self, and other forms of pride are there, which manifest themselves in our endeavour to throw off all spiritual restraints, to forget the limitation of our powers, to set each one up for himself as God, perfectly discerning good and evil. Oh, what weariness of soul! To what an utter desert of life does this often lead us! Do we not find that in proportion as we exalt our intellect alone, and become gods to ourselves, shutting our Heavenly Father out of our sight, we starve all the warm emotions of our souls, and find ourselves stranded at last in the midst of blackest night, a miserable wreck on the shores of unbelief? Then, whatever theories we may hold about original sin, it must, I think, be very clear to us, that not only do we possess a rich inheritance of good from the past, which we may use if we will for our advantage, but we also—so much the worse for us, alas!—inherit a terrible legacy of evil, which in various degrees cleaves to us as our skin, circulates in our blood, works in our brain, enters into our very likings, and tastes, and tendencies. We cannot if we would, obliterate the past. We cannot if we would, live as though it never had been. We groan, being burdened under a thousand ills, which, starting from as many different ancestors, meet and work their sore work in us, both in body and in soul. Yet once more. The proper condition of our souls is progress. But turned off its right track, losing its proper scent after the true object of existence, flung off from its gravitation towards God as the sun and centre of its life; this very tendency to progress be-

comes restlessness; a dissatisfied longing after something not yet reached. As the moralist puts it, "Man never is, but always to be blest:" or as the Preacher says "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." It is the desire of a man which consumeth him. Whither, supposing the Psalmist had wings given to him, could he have fled to find the rest he longed for? Suppose the poet Cowper could have met with a "lodge in some vast wilderness," we know that with his disposition he would soon have sunk into hopeless melancholy. Some of you are looking forward with pleasurable feelings to a sojourn by the sea. But how soon will the delight of the change wear off, the music of the sea change into a dreary monotone, and you will be longing for the activities of life again. Amongst the ancient Greeks the story was told of Sisyphus, who, for his wickedness in this life, was condemned, in the lower regions, to roll a huge stone up a hill, which as soon as it reached the top always rolled down again; and of Ixion, who for his ingratitude had his hands and feet chained to a wheel in everlasting motion; and of Tantalus, who for his sins was afflicted with a raging thirst, which was aggravated by his being placed in the midst of a lake, the waters of which always receded from his lips, whenever he attempted to drink them. Now Mr. Disraeli in one of his books pictures a time when there was a respite in these sufferings of the lost: when the stone of Sisyphus fell into a lake with a great splash, and was lost for ever: and Ixion rested on his wheel: and Tantalus was permitted to slake his thirst: and O! great was the joy and thankfulness of each. But before a day

goes by discontent creeps in, each grows restless and dissatisfied. Ixion wants not only rest but freedom. Sisyphus wants not only deliverance from his toil, but reinstatement in lost honour. And Tantalus, not content with water, longs for his wine of his native plains. How true a moral is there in all this, and how good an illustration of that restlessness of soul, which eats into, and destroys the happiness of most of us! Where then is rest, true and abiding to be found? Rest, which abides because its foundations are strong in righteousness. Has any voice carrying with it authority and power, ever been heard amongst the many voices of men, calling weary souls to rest? I know of one place, and one only: and that is the love of God in Jesus Christ. I know of one voice, and of one only; and that is the voice of the Saviour of men, in the words of the text, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

III.—Let us now consider awhile, the purport of the Lord's invitation and promise, as contained in these words. They were words uttered in the consciousness of the possession of power to give rest. As such, they well accord with those assertions of general power and authority, on the part of our Lord, which are quite out of keeping with the rest of His character, if we regard Him simply as a man,—nay more, which are inconsistent with the sinlessness and perfection of His character, unless we regard Him Divine, as well as human. But which, looking at Him as Divinely Human, and Humanly Divine, fall into their true place in the story of His life. It was His prerogative then, to offer rest to souls seeking peace, through the forgiveness of sin;

because He had fulfilled the conditions on which peace could be given. Jesus Christ, as the dead and risen Lord, is the bringer of peace to troubled souls. Our hearts can confide in him, because of his life and death of self-sacrifice. No man can influence the souls of other men for good who does not exhibit the spirit of self-sacrifice himself. A Christian professor may try to reconcile his profession of religion with a free indulgence in worldly amusements, and greed of gain, but he will be powerless to influence the souls of his fellow men. It is to the holy and self-denying, that we turn in our time of need. We confide in their love, we receive their words, we are comforted by their consolation. Here is One, however, the tenderness of whose pity, the unselfishness of whose love, and the purity of whose life stand by themselves, far, far, transcending all earthly examples whatever. Because He had known trouble and conflict, and was to know death, He could say to his followers, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

More than this, the Lord Jesus Christ can offer rest to us, because His life was lived, and His death was died for us. If there is any meaning in language, this is the teaching of one and all the gospels; this is the truth elaborated in the epistles. "He came to give his life a ransom for many," are His own words. He was the manifestation of the Divine love of righteousness, of the Divine abhorrence of sin. Hence His life and death for us are the means by which God can, consistently with His own essential righteousness, shew the no less essential love of His heart towards His sinful children. We, too, feel that

here is love that we can love, based upon righteousness that we can esteem. We can securely rest, feeling forgiven for the past, and possessed of a new motive to holiness in the future, in the love which loved us first, and loved us so well. As we trust in Him we thankfully say "We have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We feel His life and death for us to be indeed a redemption; a deliverance from our own sins, and the consequences which, as surely as God rules by law, must otherwise follow sin. So we cease from our vain and wearying search after peace, by ceremonies, or morality, or self-infliction alone, and say

Now rest my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre rest.

Then to souls torn by conflicting doubts, and searchings and endless speculations concerning truth, Christ offers a rest based upon authority; not mere authority on which men might feel it unmanly and weak to rest, but an authority backed by purity of life, by goodness of heart, and by cumulative evidences of Divine power. Surely such an one has claims upon my confidence and wrapt attention, and I may find the rest and satisfaction of mind I seek, if, like Mary, I sit still at the Master's feet, and hear Him say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "The only begotten Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him" (and O, what a revealing! no cold abstract idea, but our Father in heaven, warm with love, and caring for all that belongs to us His children,) "He that believeth in Me shall never

die." "I go to prepare a place for you." Nor need we bend blindly to this authority, for we feel that these teachings do us good in our inmost souls, and that we are purest and happiest in our lives, when we believe them most fully. Thus, as we "do the will of God, do we know that the doctrine is from Him."

Then what better reproof, and antidote to the overweening and restless pride of our souls, can we have, than to place ourselves by the side of the humility of Jesus—the humility of true greatness? Indeed this is one of the conditions on which rest is offered to us. "Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," the Saviour adds to the words of my text. Thus the restless pride and surging commotion of human hearts are to be calmed and quieted, as they rest on His quiet lowly breast. Our pride is to be rebuked and cast out, as we witness One, so much purer and stronger and wiser than ourselves, lowlier and more meek also: and our troubled spirits find in him a sanctuary of constant tender love;—a love of the Father reaching us through Him.

Then, in all the troubles which we have in common with the rest of the children of men, and in the special trials which come to us as Christians, we find rest in the assurance of the Lord's fellow-feeling with us, in the assurance of His constant thought of us, as our Great High Priest, in the assurance of the presence and constant help of the Holy Spirit of God, the Divine Comforter. Here we find a power which shows itself strong in our weakness; a power that helps us to walk without weariness

and to run without faintness ; a power that nerves us for the fight and that strengthens us to endure. And then, last of all, how sweet it is to the weary life about to close, as it leaves its hopes, its fears, its disappointments, its world behind ; to find in Jesus Christ, its Lord and Saviour, everlasting rest.

Have you, have we, gone to Christ in glad response to His gracious invitation ? I think I hear some of you say, "where is He, that I may go to Him ? I am told to wash in the fountain, but I see no fountain ; to bathe in the purple flood, but I find no such flood ; to touch the hem of His garment, but, alas ! I cannot see His garment. If I only could, the process would be simple." My dear hearers, perhaps you have been too much bewildered by figurative words ; but if you are really in earnest to be delivered from the burden of your sins, from the sad dreariness of your doubts, and from the tumultuous ragings of your pride : you will soon find your way to the simple, but for you precious truth, which these figures are intended to make plain—repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ; you will come to Christ, and coming to Him you will find yourself in God the Father's love. Do you repeat the question, Where is He ? I reply He is an unseen presence about you. Partaker as we believe Him to be of the essence of Deity, He is everywhere present by His Spirit,—present with Divine power softened by human sympathy. He sees you, though you cannot see Him. He hears you, though you cannot hear Him. I cannot stop now to tell you how all this can be. I only say, that the more we know of what

is in the Scriptures, and of what is going on around us in creation, the more do we discover ways in which it all is possible. Speak to Him as if you saw Him, and say, "Here am I, Lord Jesus, a soul burdened with sin, or doubt, or sorrow, or all combined, in Thine infinite pity give me rest."

SERMON IV.

LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

“Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

I PETER, i, 8.

I DARE say that you have been met before now, by some one who spoke to you in familiar words of friendship ; who at first seemed quite a stranger to you, until a glance of the eye, a movement of the lip, a certain expression of the features at once revealed to you an old friend. And thus it has seemed to me, concerning the Peter of the Epistles. He has grown so in knowledge, and deepened so in rich experience, that we scarcely recognize in him, at first, the fitful impetuous Peter of the Gospels. But we cannot read very far in this letter of his to the early Christians without hearing the tones, and recognizing the speech, of an old friend. Very soon do we discover the same energy of character, though knit more firmly by age ; which showed itself, somewhat rashly at times, in his earlier days ; and the same warm love to, and enthusiastic admiration for the person of Jesus Christ, as that which led him in former times into circumstances of danger, which were too much for his strength.

The Jews had already in the days when this letter was written, begun to be scattered over the world ; partly through the calamities of war, and partly through the necessities and attractions of commerce. Many of them who lived in those countries of Asia, which are mentioned in the second verse of the epistle, had heard of the Saviour from the lips of the Apostles and first disciples, and had thus been brought to love Him, and to trust Him ; but were in consequence of this their love to Jesus Christ, exposed to many dangers, and were suffering much persecution. It was in order to comfort them, and to strengthen them in the midst of these sufferings, as well as to supply them with a higher morality than they had hitherto known, that this epistle was written. This was all the more needful, because they, like ourselves, had not seen with their eyes the person of Jesus Christ. They, like ourselves, found themselves loving a Saviour whom they had never seen.

I. Our text reminds us that the object of a Christian's love is *unseen*.

That love, pure and tender and strong, may nevertheless be cherished towards one whom we have never seen, will be evident if we consider first—that we do not ordinarily see the object of our affection. We do indeed see the hands that minister to our comfort ; but we have never looked upon the soul whose love for us moves those hands into deeds of kindness. We see the expression of the eyes which kindle with love at our approach ; but not the spirit within, which feels itself happy in our companionship. We hear the voice that welcomes us home ; but

the intelligence within, which shapes and chooses the words, and that modulates the tones, is of necessity invisible to us. Hence the vast sad difference that death makes in our friends; we are brought then to feel, how, all that we most loved and prized has departed; leaving us only an empty decaying casket; and like Abraham, who once had said to Sarah his wife, "I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon," we are compelled to rise up from before our dead, and say with him, of those most deeply loved, and most fondly cherished, "Let me bury my dead out of my sight." Secondly, we often find ourselves loving living persons whom we have never seen. Sometimes it happens that through sympathy of thought and tastes, we are led to correspond upon a subject in which we are mutually interested, and there crop up, so to speak, little expressions which reveal to us a nature we can love. Sometimes, too, by sympathy of affection for an object dear to us both. We have perhaps a dear child away in a foreign land, or in the solitude of a large town, some one writes to us concerning him, speaks kindly and tenderly of him, tells us of offices of friendship wrought for him, and we cannot but love them for it. Or we have read in history of patriots whose love for their country was stronger than death; of philanthropists who sought in prisons and in haunts of poverty and sin for the wretched, the miserable, the blind, and the naked; and of men and women whose lives have been pure and saintly in the midst of sinful surroundings; and these all have commanded our admiration and our love.

Thirdly. Much of the ordinary affection of our hearts,

is necessarily, through the vicissitudes of life, bestowed on unseen objects. Our children grow up, and leave home, and our affectionate solicitude follows them whither they go. Our friends cross the seas, and make their homes in distant lands, but thither our love follows them. One by one death takes them away from us, and then our widowed love feeds itself upon the remembrance of the past. We think of all they have been to us, and of the joy we have had together; and our thoughts follow them to heaven. We love to think of their employment, of their surroundings, and of their companionship: even as Longfellow sings of his dead daughter:

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
She lives whom we call dead.

Day after day, we think what she is doing,
In those bright realms of air;
Year after year her tender steps pursuing;
Behold her grown more fair.

Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
The bond that nature gives;
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
May reach her where she lives.

In some such ways as these, have we as Christians been brought to love an Unseen Saviour. We have heard of His wondrous power,—the power that smoothed the waves and bade the winds be still. We have heard His gracious words,—the words of Him who spoke as never man spake. We have read of His tender love, in its many manifesta-

tions, and of the spotless purity of His character; and we have seen how these—the power, the wisdom, the holiness, and the love—were all for us. So that, while we esteem and love Him, for what He was and is in Himself; we love Him also with a grateful love. We are not ashamed to make the words of the apostle John our own: “We love Him because He first loved us.” In the strength of this love of the Unseen Saviour, these early Christians suffered the loss of all things, and braved cruel suffering and death. In the strength of this love, too, how many a martyr since then, has gone to prison and to the stake, as to a bridal feast! In the strength of this love, what saintly lives have been lived in obscurity, in contempt, and to the sacrifice of worldly wealth and fame! What brave and self-denying deeds have been wrought! How much suffering has been meekly borne, and how many lives have been laid down at last in peace and hope!

II. Let us consider awhile the necessity there is for the Church to have an *absent* Lord—an *Unseen* Saviour.

“It is expedient,” said the Saviour, “for you that I go away:” and He knew what was best for His people, as well as for the interests of His Church. Nor does it require much reflection on our part, in order to see how necessary it is for His Church, that He should be absent from it. We can most of us remember our grief and wonder, when the loved father of a family had been taken away by death, in his prime, and from the midst of the children who seemed to need his care. But have we not also seen, how those children have learnt habits of self-reliance, of indomitable energy and perseverance, and of

trust in, and affection one for the other ; which in all probability they would never have acquired, were it not for their father's early death ? In a similar way, we can conceive how the Church has been benefited by the removal of its Lord. Each believer, rooted in Christ, grows up into a more vigorous individual life. Faith has greater scope for its exercise. Love is developed in greater purity. A constancy, which neither sufferings, nor death, can break, is generated ; while the sphere of Christian benevolence is extended to all who are in spiritual need. For as he looks upon rags and poverty ; upon sickness and want ; upon prisoners and weary wanderers ; the Christian hears the voice of his unseen Master, saying : " Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." " As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world."

Nor must we forget how necessary it is for the completion of the Lord's work for us, that He should be absent. All that could be accomplished on earth by Him, He had completed when, in the throes of death, he exclaimed, " It is finished." But from the life and death of self-sacrifice for men, He, as our Great High Priest, must pass within the veil, must enter into the holy place, to appear in the presence of God for us ; to obtain gifts for men ; to spread forth the creative and renewing energy of God, the Holy Spirit ; to send forth the Comforter ; to be at the centre of all life, thought, and being ; the visible link binding together man and God ; the visible creation with its invisible Maker. Not less is His absence from earth necessary

for the work of the preparation of heaven for us. Preparation is one of God's ideas. By slow and progressive steps, was this earth made ready for the reception of man ; its coal seams—the light and heat of untold ages—stored up for his use, “ a vein made for the silver, and a place for the gold,” the animal creation crowned with creatures most adapted for the use and companionship of man, and myriad lines of beauty, and sounds of music, formed, which should meet and strike responsive chords in man's heart. Nor has the work of preparation ceased. “ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” said the Saviour ; and what, a part at least, of the work He is accomplishing now is, He reveals when He says, “ I go to prepare a place for you.” If disposed to be impatient, and to murmur at the Lord's absence, my hearers ; let us think of His work which by His very absence He is accomplishing for us : how, when we come to die, we shall not be going away from Christ, but to Christ : how, when the far-off land lifts itself from the ocean, we shall, through the misty distance, descry the form of the Saviour waiting to welcome us home—a home already prepared for us by one of ourselves, who knows us, and who has had all the resources of wisdom, of skill, of power, of imagination, and of love most infinite, at His command ; and who, taking us by the hand, as we step on that, to us, unknown shore, will say : “ Soul, rest from thy labours ; ” “ Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

III. Let us notice the power by means of which, we are able to realize the excellency of the Unseen Saviour, and are thus led to love him, “ Yet believing.” This power is faith.

Faith, as a simple belief, is the power by which we make our own much of the knowledge which is known by sight to others ; and if the range of our knowledge was bounded by our personal experience it would be very limited indeed. The astronomer numbers the stars, he measures their distances, and calculates their orbits ; he writes what he has discovered in books, and we, believing him, taking him at his word, make his knowledge our own. The geologist examines the rocks ; he deciphers in them the story of the earth's history in the past ; he tells us what he has seen, and we, believing, make his discoveries our own. The historian rakes up the musty records of a nation's history, and out of their tangled skein weaves for us a consecutive story, and we, believing, make his researches our own. The traveller goes to distant lands ; he spends years in strange countries ; then he comes back and tells us of the people, their ways, their religion, and other things concerning them, and we believing him, make this, his knowledge, ours. Thus nearly all we know we have to take upon trust from others. In like manner, only in a vastly higher degree, and with those emotions of the heart, with which we receive tidings that concern our highest interest ; have we with the early Christians heard of Jesus Christ ; of His work wrought for us by his life, and sufferings, and death ; of his deep and constant love, of His genuine sympathy with us in all our needs, and of the work He went back to heaven to accomplish for us there, and believing this, believing it all the more strongly, as we feel His words answering the questionings of our hearts ; as we feel His self-sacrificing life, purifying our life ; we make our own all

the assurances of His words, all the facts of His life, and all the preciousness of His work.

But faith has a prospective as well as a retrospective power. With one hand it takes hold of the past, and with the other it grasps the future. It not only enables us to appropriate all there is for us in the days that are gone, but it also enables us to realize all that is promised to us in the time to come.

It set times past in present view,
Brings distant prospects home ;
Of things a thousand years ago,
Or thousand years to come.

Love anticipates the future. Faith enables us to realize it, to live in it. In the days of separation, which often go before the day when two lives are made one, how much do we think of the return of the absent. We picture to ourselves our future home in all its expected love, its deep peace of satisfaction, and in all the hoped for friendships which shall gather around it. Thus, we as Christians believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of the *expectation* of glory (as the passage may be read) as we think of the return of our Beloved to fetch our souls home. We picture to ourselves our heavenly home, in its safety, with its walls great and high, and its angel-guarded gates. We think of its fulness of joy, rising from innumerable springs of experience in the past, and flowing clear and full as the river of God. We think of its glory—the glory of the abode of God, and of the place into which has been gathering for ages, the true glory and honour of all the ages ; until our

souls are kindled with the glory, and we joy with joy unspeakable. We feel it is ours in the germ now. The warrior, in the moment when the assurance of victory dawns upon him, sees through the dust and smoke of the battle-field, the honours which will be lavished upon him when, he set his foot upon his native shore. Not less do Christian men and women in the midst of the lowliness and the strife of their earthly life, anticipate the final triumph.

They see the victory from afar,
They shall with Jesus reign.

IV. Let us notice in conclusion that the love of the unseen is not without its dangers.

We are tempted to unfaithfulness. The world would allure us away from our allegiance by her syren songs. She comes to us with her blandishments, with her fame, with her pleasures, with her gains, and says to us, "Love me, and all these will I give you; take present gratification in preference to an expected good which may never come." We are tempted at times, most sorely to doubt—to intellectual doubt. It comes to us almost in proportion to the strength of our love, and the brightness at other times of our anticipations. If He, whom I love, we are tempted to say, cares indeed for me, surely in answer to my earnest strivings, and to my agonizing prayers, He would give some response, some token of His love; but alas! all is silent, there is no voice, nor any that regardeth. We are tempted to doubt His remembrance of us. The poor bed-ridden sufferer under bare rafters may say—"Amidst all the glories of heaven, does He ever think

of me, lying here in pain, and poverty, and weariness, day after day?" The poor labourer in the field, earning a bare existence, may say—"Does He think ever of me, unknown, and poor, and weary, as I often am?" He does, my hearers, notwithstanding all our doubts. Not until He has forgotten His own suffering, and the conflict He endured alone, will He forget you, my sister, in your lonely pain and grief. Not until He has forgotten the lowliness of His own earthly life, its poverty, its work, and its weary journeyings, will He forget you, my brother. In the midst of all these doubts and questionings, let us take as His own words, to us, those of the Apostle, which go before those of our text: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Surely we are reminded that we have need to pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith." It is only while believing that we rejoice; while we look not at the things that are seen, that we realize the abiding glory of the unseen; that we are assured of the reality of the Lord's existence, and of the constancy of His love; and are able joyfully to anticipate the time when He shall return to fetch us home to our Father's house, and to the Heaven of His love.

SERMON V.

THE MASTER'S PROMISE OF QUICK RETURN, AND THE SERVANT'S RESPONSE.

“He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

REV. xxii. 20.

THE text forms part of the closing words of revelation ; and you will agree with me, that the words form a very appropriate and beautiful conclusion to the sacred volume ; composed, as that volume is, of many books, the production of widely-different minds, and of ages far apart ; yet, whose many lines of thought converge, as we believe, with more or less distinctness and directness in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He of whom those Scriptures testify, is the Speaker. The voice is the last audible utterance from heaven to men. The hearer is the last surviving member of the band of men who had “ seen, and felt, and handled ” the Incarnate Word ; and the last link of the chain which united the preceding age of sight to the subsequent ages of faith. Nor are the words a less appropriate ending to the particular book in which they are found. John had been astonished at the abundance, the

mysteriousness, and the sublimity of the visions he had beheld. He had been filled with the ecstatic bliss of heaven. And now, as in awaking from a dream, the outline of the heavenly walls was growing shadowy; the brightness of the heavenly streets was becoming dim; the ravishing sweetness of the heavenly music was dying away in the distance; the glorified form of the Master he loved was vanishing from his sight; and the realities of his island prison life were assuming distinctness around him: but, before the glory quite fades away, and before he quite realizes the loneliness of his earthly life, the Master, as was ever His gracious habit, speaks the comforting promise to His servant—"Surely I come quickly:" and, from the depths of his heart, the servant responds—"Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus."

I. Let us consider awhile The Master's Promise. It was one of quick return. It was a repetition of the promise which aforesaid He had made to the inner circle of His friends in the midst of their grief. "If I go away, I will come again to you." "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." It was in accordance with the more general declaration, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." It was in harmony with the assurance of the angels to the bewildered disciples, as on Olivet their Lord vanished from their midst: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." On the strength of promises like these, the early Church looked eagerly for its Lord's speedy return. This expect-

tation received strength from the intensity of the love which longed for nearness and sight. It was cherished, too, by the force of the circumstances around. The Church found herself weak and despised. She was sorely tried by persecution and martyrdom ; but she had a Lord all glorious and powerful, who, if He were only to come again, as He had promised, would subdue her enemies under her ; would lift her to the pinnacle of fame ; and would be glorified in His saints. O, when would He come ! and why were His chariot wheels so long in tarrying ? Then, there was the hope of the glory promised to be revealed ; the dignity, the happiness, the perfect security of life, within Christ's presence. Thus was the early Church led to desire, and at times vehemently to desire, the return of the Lord. It was, however, the eager expectation of love, rather than the matured conviction of judgment. That the early Christians were mistaken, thus in limiting the meaning of the promise to their Lord's personal appearance, and personal reign on the earth, is clear from the actual subsequent history of the Christian Church. Nor was this unforeseen by the apostles. Thus, St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, qualifies his words concerning the second coming of the Lord, by adding : " Of the times and the seasons ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Even as our Lord Himself had qualified His own promise : " Of that day and that hour knoweth no man...but the Father."

This belief of a considerable portion of the early Church in the speedy return of the Lord to a personal reign on

the earth, has been perpetuated through all the succeeding ages until now. Amongst those who have cherished it, and to whom it has been the all-sustaining, all-animating thought of their lives, may be numbered, perhaps, some of the most saintly men and women the Church has ever possessed. Yet to them, however much we esteem them (and I, for one, do cherish the most tender esteem for them), I must apply the remark I used just now in reference to the early Church—theirs is the eager expectation of love, more than the mature conviction of judgment.

We shall find, however, that certain classes of mind, and certain habits of thought, are more open to the influence of this belief than are others: emotional souls, who long for a living person on whom they could lavish their love, as Mary did, when she anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hair of her head: timid, shrinking natures, who bend before the rough blast of the world's scorn and unbelief, and would fain have a stronger nature visibly near them, on which they could lean, and strong loving arms in which they could find safety and shelter. Then there are minds, in whom the rampant wrong, the continued oppression, and the successful wickedness of earth, with the apparent hopelessness of all efforts to dispel the thick darkness of sin and ignorance, which, like a funeral pall, hangs over mankind, have induced unbelief, weakness of faith; who have given up Christian effort in despair; who have been brought to think that nothing but the return of the Master can work the change they desire; and who rather comfort themselves than otherwise in the thought, that the increasing

darkness and gloom of the night is but a token of the quick approach of the dawn. Sadder still is the belief held by some, that, save for the few souls whom God picks out of the world as brands plucked from the burning, the earth, with its seething mass of humanity increasing and multiplying generation after generation, is abandoned by its Maker; is handed over to the devil; is doomed to destruction. Worse than all, too, is the feeling of exultation over all this in which some of the, in other respects, gentlest souls indulge, as they anticipate, with feelings akin to revenge, their final triumph and reign over the wicked. Alas! for the strange and sad contrarities and inconsistencies human nature yields to; and from which, it would seem, even renewed human nature is not yet quite free.

I have not time to explain to you, even if I were able, the various theories, with their specific differences, which men hold concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ. Now we are to reign in the air with the Lord, as in a kind of intermediate heaven, whence we are to behold the wicked hurled to their destined destruction. Again, the Lord is to set up His throne on the earth—it may be at Jerusalem, which will thus recover more than all its ancient glory. Mixed up with this belief, more or less definitely, is the return of the Jews to their own land. For a thousand years is this millenium to last, and then the devil is to be unbound—the hounds of wickedness again let loose; God defeated, and Satan triumphant once more, until the final judgment for ever settles the fate of all. I have not exhausted the list of theories and suppositions, nor can I

examine minutely the varying amount of truth and error there may exist in those I have so briefly adverted to ; but if you examine them carefully, I think you will find that all theories of the Lord's return, which involve the idea of His personal reign on the earth, rest upon, and are allied to, very limited views of God's power and purpose in creation ; that they localize and limit the presence of Jesus, which should be universal ; and are inconsistent with the idea of equal nearness to the Saviour, which it is now the privilege of every believer, wherever he may live, to feel : that they chiefly rest upon the hasty interpretation of prophecies which are doubtful in their meaning, mysterious in their wording, and for the right understanding of which the time has not yet come : that they are inconsistent with the general tenour of the plain teaching of God's Word ; and, incongruous and contradictory in their details, are not consistent with the perfection and full happiness of the human race.

Our Lord's Promise is, however, capable of bearing several other interpretations besides that on which I have hitherto chiefly dwelt. It is fulfilled when He comes by His Spirit to bless His Church and the world. I do not now refer to the ordinary operation of the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son ; but I speak of the extraordinary visitations of that Spirit. I think I am right in supposing, that there may be times when the power of the Eternal Spirit may be felt more than at other times. There are waves of the sea which, impelled by extraordinary force, make their mark high up on the hitherto dry beach, to which line, after awhile, the ordinary waves may attain.

There are convulsions of the earth, which in a moment lift the land to a height, that ordinarily it would have taken many years to reach. There are storms which clear the atmosphere in an hour, making it light and buoyant. There are winds which sweep off the dead leaves of the past, and prepare the way for the bursting life of spring. In human history, too, there are times when human minds receive an extraordinary impulse through the quickening of the Infinite Mind; and men think and write more in a brief space of time, than whole generations and ages had thought or done before. Why, therefore, may there not be times of moral and spiritual, as well as of intellectual, or even of physical, awakening, when the Lord, by His Spirit, may come to His Church, or to the world, as on the day of Pentecost, like a mighty rushing wind? There have been such times. The Reformation, for example, and the spiritual awakening in the last century under Whitfield and Wesley. Let us, my hearers, be quick to discern the Master's voice and form in all such times, and to take them as a fulfilment of His promise—"Surely I come quickly."

The Lord's Promise is fulfilled when He comes to fetch home the souls of His dying saints. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also," is His promise. Constantly is the Lord fulfilling His promise, as He calls His servants home to Himself. Nor do they have to wait until they put on the spiritual body which awaits them in the next state of existence, before they vividly realize the Lord's presence. How many dying

sufferers have felt assured that they have "seen Jesus" before they have left the body! And when we remember how there may be a community of intelligence, as there is a community of matter between all worlds; when we think of the powers of the human mind, which are bound and restrained for the purposes of our earthly life; when, too, we think of the need for comforting strength, of which a soul about to be severed from all its former associations may have need; and when to all this we add the unlimited resources of our Father God; we need not be in any haste to attribute such expressions to the effect of a disordered imagination. In more ways than we can conceive, and in some, at least, which we may comprehend, may Jesus fulfil His own promise, by coming to fetch His own friends to their rest.

Then the Lord will fulfil His Promise when He will great come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and glory, to the final judgment. This judgment, "when God will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained," is in the Gospel associated with the return of the Lord. It is then that He is to divide the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. It is then that He is to be glorified in His saints, and admired of them that believe. It is then that "every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth, shall wail because of Him." And then, when righteousness shall be publicly vindicated, will the purifying fire burst forth in all its power; that out of it may issue forth, in its new beauty, this earth, with its surrounding heavens:

And this dark earth around us lie,
Arrayed in immortality.

II. To the Master's Promise, as understood in any of these ways, THE SERVANT'S RESPONSE is—"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." This is the prayer of a Christian soul, longing for the conversion of the world to Christ; and one which must be devoutly breathed by us when we consider the condition of the nations around us. We need but look at the teeming population of Europe, upon whom no form of Christianity has any hold; or the sensual and half-brutalized condition of the people of the Mahometan nations; or the degraded state of the teeming millions of India and of China, relieved though it is by rays of intellectual light here and there; or the savage condition of the islanders of Southern seas, concerning many of whom it is difficult to ascertain if a spark of humanity be left, or whether, according to some, it has ever yet been kindled; and to think, on the other hand, of the blessings to both body and soul which true Christianity brings; to lead us to cry, in all the vehement earnestness of our souls—"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The SERVANT'S RESPONSE is, further, the heartfelt wish of a soul ripe for glory. John was now an old man. His work and his friendships lay far back in the past. Time was, when he had followed his Master in his journeyings; when, under the sad shadow of the cross, he had received into his care the mother of his Lord; when alternately (as from such natures there does) gushed forth tender love,

and flashed forth burning zeal ; he had defended the early faith ; he had warned the unwary ; he had strengthened the weak ; he had, as I, holding by the general faith of the Church, believe, revealed the innermost soul of his Master to the brethren, by the Gospel he had written : but he had outlived all this. All he could do now, was to abide a prisoner on Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ. He had been purified by trial. His conversation was already in heaven. What other wish could he have but to be with the Master he loved ? And this is the wish to which he gives utterance in the text—“ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

You see it is a wish that is not, in this aspect of it, to be shared by the young, the active, and the strong disciple. It would denote a morbid, an unhealthy state of mind. If such an one were desirous of being freed from the work and service of life. It is for such to work, and to find their happiness in the service of the Master, and in waiting His coming in the spirit of the words—

If life be long I will be glad,
That I may long obey ;
If short then why should I be sad,
To soar to endless day.

Content, if when the day is over, and the work is done, the Master will fulfil His promise as he says—“ Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

The SERVANT'S RESPONSE is the wish of a soul suffering wrong, and longing for the return of the right. I have already noticed how the sense of suffering had fostered the

expectation of the Lord's speedy return to reign on the earth in the midst of the early church. And, though the Lord comes not to fulfil the impatient expectations of His servants in the way they look for ; we may yet justly look for the time when right shall be publicly vindicated; when ages of oppression and wrong may be rolled back upon their perpetrator ; when the saints so long down trodden, shall be honoured with their Lord; and when the ancient promise repeated by the Saviour, that the meek shall inherit the earth, shall receive its fullest accomplishment.

The SERVANT'S RESPONSE is also the longing of a soul to realize in perpetuity the glory of which it had been privileged to behold a glimpse. We have dreamt a dream before now, in which we have found ourselves surrounded with the friends of former days. Our sainted dead have come back to us. We have clasped their hands. We have heard their voice—the old voice we knew so well. We have folded them in our embrace. But alas! in the midst of our joy the vision vanishes, and we are alone, and it may be very desolate. Thus it was with John. He had heard the voice he knew so well. He had felt the loving touch of Him upon whose breast in former days he had leaned. He had been led through some of the many mansions of the Father's house of which the Lord had spoken, in words which he himself had penned. He had looked upon glory of which the ancient prophets whose figures and similes he uses had never conceived. He had heard music of which psaltery and harp were but earth's childish whisperings. He had felt the deep peace of the rest of God ; but now, all, all were fast fading from his sight,

and loosening from his grasp. Do we wonder that in the returning loneliness of his lot, and the desolateness of his heart, he should quickly, eagerly, respond to the Lord's Promise of quick return, by saying, "Not for long, O Lord do thou be absent. Come quickly Lord Jesus, and fetch thy servant to thine eternal rest."

If the Son of Man were to come, would he find faith on the earth? Might he not indeed find himself a stranger and even an outcast in the churches which bear his name? Brethren, while we work for the spread of Christian truth and righteousness, let us do it in the Master's spirit. And in whatever way the Master may give to us intimations of His approach, let us be equally ready to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

SERMON VI.

WALKING BY FAITH.

“ For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

II CORINTHIANS, v. 7.

THESE words seem to form a sort of side expression of the Apostle Paul, which is intended to make clear the line of his argument. He had just been recounting the difficulties and perils which he and his brethren, as Apostles of Jesus Christ, met with in the course of their ministry ; and in my text, he pauses for a moment, and taking his readers into his confidence, tells them the secret of his strength. It lay in close fellowship with the unseen, in the contemplation of divine things, and in the vivid realization of the future glory.

There were indeed times in his life, and what man of earnest soul is there, who has not known them ? when his spirit groaned being burdened ; but even then it did not desire to be unclothed, it did not long for the silence and void of the grave. It rather earnestly desired to be clothed upon with its house which was from heaven ; the body God would give it as it would please Him. For the Apostle adds, confidentially as it were, and these words are the key that unlocks the whole passage ; “ We walk by faith, not by sight.”

The doctrine of the text is therefore this—The life of a Christian man is much more a life of faith than a life of sight.

I. In endeavouring to illustrate and apply this doctrine, let me first of all endeavour to show you what faith itself is. I remember that, when I was very young, I used to have a dread of hearing any minister preach about faith. The argument and illustrations seemed to me so endless, and the result of the whole so confused and unsatisfactory, as to perplex me very greatly. Nor have I found myself alone in this feeling. I very well recollect visiting a man who was very near to death, “Oh, Sir,” he said, “do tell me what faith is. People come to see me, and talk so about dead faith, and living faith, faith of the head, and faith of the heart, and faith to believe, that I am sorely troubled to know what I should do.” I endeavoured to explain to him, very simply, as I shall try and explain to you, that faith is nothing more or less in its essence than simple trust; the trust that a child reposes in its parents, the trust that friend reposes in friend, that men in trade and commerce place in each other, that christian faith is this same trust exercised in a higher form, and for higher and infinitely more precious purposes in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. As a living writer has very beautifully said, “In faith and patience he (man) painfully learns the arts of mature life. In faith he ploughs, in faith he sows, in faith he borrows, in faith he lends, in faith he carries on his commerce with his fellow man, often and of necessity confiding to his care the very means to which he looks for his daily bread. Thus you see that the faith in Jesus, the

trust I mean, in a sympathizing personal Saviour, whereby the sinner is purified, justified, and saved, is after all no new principle, but rather the old and abiding principle of trustfulness, which alone gives cohesion to our natural life." * Faith then in its essence is one and the same ; it is the simple trust which runs all through our lives, and holds society together, but the objects on which this trust becomes fixed, and towards which it is exercised are different. These objects again affect us differently according to the earnestness with which we regard them, and the momentousness of the issues concerning ourselves which depend upon them.

For example—Am I oppressed with the thought of my sinfulness, and of the terrible consequences here and hereafter, to which my sin must inevitably lead ; am I groaning to be delivered from its power, am I intensely longing after a better and purer life, and do I while in this state of mind, hear One, whose life and death give weight and authority to the words and commend them to my judgment and heart, say "Come unto me." "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost"? I gladly reply,

Lo, glad I come, and thou blest Lamb,
Wilt take me guilty as I am ;

and with my whole nature, head and heart, affections and understanding, I cling to the Father's love revealed in Him. I cling to it as a drowning man clings to a rope thrown for his rescue ; I venture my whole spiritual welfare upon it,

* Rev C. Pritchard, M.A., in "Continuity of Nature and Revelation."

as with all the effort he can command, a man jumps from a burning ship into the boat waiting for him alongside. Again, I am often beset with the cares and difficulties of life; I am broken with breach upon breach, losses, bereavements, disappointments, and grief are thickly woven into the warp of my life; but I am told that none of these things happen in vain; that they happen either by the appointment or with the permission of an Heavenly Father; that they spring from the divine ordering of His love, and controlled by Him, must work for my real good. I believe all this and commit my way unto the Lord. I say, "He shall choose my inheritance for me." I trust Him for all I need in this life as well as for all I shall need in the life which is to come. Once more, in answer to my questionings concerning that life to come, Christ speaks to me in confident tones, and says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." "Because I live ye shall live also." The writings of His servants abound with intimations of the nature of that heavenly life; of its rest for the weary; of its palms for victors; of its crowns for conquerors; of its increasing fulness of knowledge; of its perfect friendship, and of its pure and high worship. I believe these intimations and promises, and I am led by anticipation even now to realize some of the glory and the joy. My faith becomes to me, in the words of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

It seems to be this particular exercise of faith to which the Apostle refers in the text. It was the realization of the unknown future; the seeing with his mind's eye the

glory waiting to be revealed ; the joy that was set before him ; which helped him to endure persecutions, scorning, privations and loss, for Christ's sake : in other words, he walked by spiritual insight, not by natural sight.

Let me here correct the impression which is sometimes made by preachers, that Christian faith is contrary, or opposed, to natural reason. In my opinion, there can be no greater mistake. True faith can never be contrary to true reason. It may be, and is often, above reason, and in advance of reason ; but as an army follows its pioneers, reason follows faith, though it may be afar off. The conceptions of men of genius, and the inventions which have benefited mankind, have been at first certainly above the sober understanding of men ; nay, have often appeared contrary to it ; but by and by the world comes up to them and prizes them. Thus it is with Christian faith. The truths we are called to believe may seem shrouded with mystery ; but through the mist, by the aid of past experience, we discern, even though it be but dimly, their shadowy outline ; and we feel that though we possess only faint intimations of their nature, yet what we know of them, and what we believe of them, so far from being repugnant to our reason, meets our purest longings, strengthens our strivings for the right, and answers to the needs of the better side of our nature.

II. The doctrine of the text I have said is, that the true life of a Christian is a life of faith, more than it is a life of sight. This is true of ordinary Christian lives, but we shall find the truth stand out in bolder relief, in proportion to the publicity and power of any individual life.

The greater the power for good we exert over our fellow-men, the more must we of necessity live in close fellowship with, and in the vivid realization of, the unseen and eternal. Let us take a few examples. The walk of Abraham was a walk of faith, as at the bidding of the Divine voice he left his father's house to journey to a place which God had told him of; exchanging, humanly speaking, a certainty for an uncertainty. He literally went out, not knowing whither he went. The Israelitish host walked by faith, when, hemmed in by mountains on the one side of them, which closed to the sea in front of them, with the Egyptian host close behind them, and the sea on the other side of them, they, at the command of God reaching them by Moses, rose up to go forward; finding only, as they did this, a way open for them through the paths of the sea. The religious life of the pious Jew, under the Mosaic ritual, was a life of faith. He was required to celebrate rites and to observe ceremonies, whose meaning and purpose were, for the most part, not understood by him; and which, looked at in themselves, could scarcely commend themselves to his reason. But there were mysterious utterances, and dark and faint intimations, which now and again had fallen from the lips of holy seers, from which he gathered that beneath and within these rites and observances there lay ensheathed the germ of a future glorious life; they thus became to him the early unfolding of truths for men, and purposes of God, which as the ages went by would burst their material covering, and startle and bless the world with their spiritual power. The lives of the Hebrew Prophets were lives of faith, as they desired to

know the full and ultimate meaning of the words they could not but utter, but were fain to be content with the assurance that they spake not for themselves, but for others, who should read their utterances in the light of the subsequent facts of the world's history. The lives of the Apostles too, as the text declares, were lives of faith, not of sight; and the same is true of the long and noble roll of Christian martyrs, who since apostolic times have joyfully suffered the spoiling of their goods, have died lingering deaths in prisons, or fiercer deaths, as on torturing racks and in fiery chariots their souls have gone from earth to heaven.

The same is true to-day. Take Christian philanthropists, like the men who laboured for the abolition of slavery; men who worked steadily on in the face of reproach and scorn, because they were inwardly assured of the righteousness of their cause, and saw with the foresight of faith the triumph in which their labours would end. So is it also with the Christian patriot and statesman, as he labours to lay the foundations of his country's strength in righteousness and truth. He works and waits in faith, discerning eternal principles of right, and beholding with the eye of faith, though afar off, their final success, when other men living only for the present see them not. These all walk, aye, and for the most part die in faith; "Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Such faith, my hearers, while it is not repugnant to reason, is not allied to superstition or presumption; for you will gather from the examples I have mentioned, as

well as from the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews just quoted, as indeed you may also learn from your own experience, that those acts of faith by which we lay hold of the unseen and the future, spread their roots in, and take their rise from the experience of the past. Thus true faith ever grows. God educates us in the exercise of it, just as a mother teaches her child to walk, first by holding her arms on either side of her darling, lest it should fall, and then moving further away little by little that it may venture more and more, and acquire fresh confidence with every venture. The language of faith in its beginning is "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." In its full assurance its language is "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

III. I would offer some observations concerning this life or walk of faith. And first—such a life must be a pure and noble life. Behind it there lies the pure life of Jesus, "The author and finisher of faith," the example which impelled by grateful love it seeks to imitate. In the believer's ears is ever sounding the divine injunction, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Around him, though invisible, save to the eye of faith, he realizes ever the presence of pure angels who have looked upon the Divine glory, he deems himself in the presence of the multitude of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. While before him, as the goal of his ambition, and the perfection of his being, he sees, by faith, the heavenly dwelling-place of a pure God, with its pure river of water of life, its crystal sea, its pure light—

The sheen of the temple in the golden street,

and so he feels constrained and helped by all holy and pure surroundings, to live that life of truth and purity, which his own conscience tells him is the right one to live. It will also be as noble as it will be pure, for it will not be lived for itself alone, but it will be lived for others. While on the one side it will be passively receptive of all divine and gracious influences, as the earth drinks in the rain and the sunshine, on the other side it will bring forth fruit of itself, it will become radiant with divine benevolence, beauteous with flowers of heavenly virtues, and ripe with golden harvest, the result of loving christian work. Secondly—Such a life I am bound to confess, must be more or less one of self-sacrifice and struggle. It is not, for example, a life of present gain. The man whose spirit delights in fellowship with the unseen, and with the spiritual, whose longings go out into the infinite, is not the man likely to make the most money here. His sympathies and convictions close effectually before him many avenues to worldly wealth, along which others haste to become rich. There come periods in his life too, when he has, like Moses, to decide whether his lot shall be cast with the right which may be downtrodden and persecuted; or with oppression and wickedness flourishing in high places. These periods recur again and again. We have also to struggle against the tendency of our nature now towards inertness and ease, and now against the promptings of eager ambition. The man of faith also often lives far in advance of his age, he is reviled as a demagogue, jeered at as a visionary, his efforts are assigned to the most unworthy motives, and not perhaps until he is dead, do men find out that a man of

faith, a prophet of God, has been living in their midst. All this is not easy to bear, and hence the necessity of the exhortations to "Fight the good fight of faith," and to "Hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." The Apostle Paul knew this full well. Two paths had lain before him; one leading quickly to worldly fame, the other through the service of Christ, leading to poverty and renunciation of self. Choosing this last, he soon found that in the words of the Master he had to "deny himself and to take up his cross daily." But fourthly—This life of faith is an inwardly happy life. There is the answer of a good conscience towards God, and the satisfaction of doing what is right.

Then, when troubles arise they are not seen only as they pass the line of our sight, but they are viewed as originating in the love of God, and ending in the glory yet to be revealed. If the ascent be difficult, like the walls of ice up which Alpine travellers cut their way, each step is cheerfully cut, because it is one step nearer the summit. Not more cheerily does this same Alpine traveller trudge through the intense cold and the slushy snow, because he knows that in the next valley rest and good cheer await him, than the Christian pilgrim journeys along dusty roads, with perils by the way, because with the telescope of faith, he has from some delectable mountain discerned afar off the shining walls of the eternal city. Then such a man gains the peace that comes from implicit trust in God, as the disposer of his earthly lot. "He endures as seeing Him who is invisible." His faith sees the result of his trials. His faith anticipates the victory. His faith

lives in the unseen present. His faith lives in the unseen future.

How much does the world owe to lives of faith which have been lived in it! Its discoveries in arts and sciences; its rich stores of poetry: all that is pure in human life, and all that is gentle and loveable in human society:—it owes all to the self-denying efforts, to the patient and often painful perseverance, to the sublime teachings, and to the rapt imaginings of its men and women of faith. And speaking of poetry, what a rich inheritance of song does the Church of Christ possess to-day as the result of the faith of the past! How sweet the simple trust of him who wrote—

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And that Thy grace can give.

Or of her who sang—

“Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out to me.”

How vivid must have been the realising faith of him who wrote the exquisitely beautiful hymn of the Latin Church, which in our version begins—

To thee, O dear, dear country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep,
For very love beholding
Thy happy name they weep.

But to recount the words of Christian song which have formed the outlet for the faith of past ages, and which

form the cherished expression of the faith of the Church to-day, would be to fill a volume, and I must forbear. How many of us are living lives of faith? Do not our worldliness, our fear, our anxiety, our coldness and our inertness, betray our unbelief? Yet is the life of faith the only true life, because it is a living in the Eternal, and if we would take part in the manifestation of the sons of God we must seek to be partakers of this "precious faith" now.

SERMON VII.

THE CHURCH SLEEPING AND WAKING.

“Awake, awake ; put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city : for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust ; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem : shake thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”

ISAIAH lii., 1, 2.

THE gift of prophetic inspiration did not destroy the individuality of the men whom God chose in old time to speak His mind to their fellow men. This is seen in the way in which the three great prophets preserve throughout their writings their distinguishing characteristics. In Ezekiel we see ever the mystic, the John of the Old Testament, a man who saw visions and who dreamt dreams. In Jeremiah we behold the tender tearful earnestness of one who “ would that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people ; ” while in Isaiah we find a man who possesses his natural gift of strong, clear eloquence, even under the most wrapt of his prophetic utterances. It would seem, too, as if from before his eyes the mists of the intervening ages were rolled away, so that

he was able to speak with clearness concerning the advent and work of the world's Messiah. If you read his book carefully you will note that there is a great difference between the former and latter parts of it. Up to the end of the thirty-ninth chapter the book is chiefly historical and local; but from this point to the end, the writer sees spread out before him the future of the church, of which he speaks in some of the sublimest language ever uttered. So great is the difference in style between these two portions of the book that some scholars have been led to suppose that they were written by two different men. But it does not appear to me that this difference of style alone, is sufficient to warrant such a conclusion, because we all know that the same man will write very differently at different periods of his own life, and according to the mood he may be in; and especially will his style be affected by the nature of the subject on which he writes. It is therefore easy and reasonable to conceive that the Prophet when he ascends from local and historical details to a vivid and broad conception of the glory and power of the Church in the latter days, should burst out into strains of impassioned eloquence which are not surpassed within the whole range of prophetic literature.

The Church of God had fallen upon evil days when the Prophet wrote the words of the text. Strange fires gleamed upon her altars, unholy hands ministered at her sacrifices, incense that was an abomination ascended towards heaven. The Church, forgetting her heavenly birth, her benevolent mission, and her glorious destiny, had become degraded. The Prophet represents her as

fainting in the streets, as lying down in the dust, and as trampled upon in the way. To a church in this sad condition the Prophet addresses the energetic language of the text, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion."

I. Our text thus presents us, in the first place, with the picture of a Sleeping Church. Now, sleep is not necessarily a guilty condition. On the contrary, it is a merciful provision of God for all His creatures, with man at their head. Nature sleeps through winter, resting from the fruitful efforts of the past summer, and taking in rest and nourishment for the work of the next. Sleep is induced by work. "The rest of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much." It is said of the late Lord Brougham, that when he was a young man, working as a barrister in the law courts by day, attending to his duties in the House of Commons at night, and then going home to write articles for the "Edinburgh Review"—thus working nearly the twenty-four hours of each day all round—he would go to his house in the country on the Saturday morning, and sleep until the Monday morning. His excessive labour demanded an excessive amount of sleep. Sleep comes to us at times very mercifully in the midst of our sorrow. You remember the long watching by the death-bed of your dear friend; the last sad scene; the days that followed when the blinds were drawn, and the house was darkened; the mournful procession to the grave; the heavy heart with which you came back to your desolated home; how it seemed as if you had left all the light, and love, and hope of your life in the grave. But God mercifully sent to you sleep, long and sound, which seemed to distance all

the recent past to you, and enabled you to look with calmness upon the sorrowful scenes through which you had just been led. And sleep comes to us very mercifully in the midst of sickness. "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well," was the response of the disciples to the announcement of the Lord—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." And who amongst us does not remember a time when the fitful, dreamy, startful, feverish sleep of the patient, gave way to a peaceful slumber, which told us that the disease had done its worst, and that now life and health would flow back into his veins. Yet sleep may become guilty; as, for example, when it is inordinately prolonged, and man spends the time in sleep in which he ought to be at work; or when, through sheer carelessness and listlessness, a man sleeps in the House of God; or when it is the effect of drunkenness, or induced by debauch. And so this Israelitish Church was guilty in her sleep; for the misfortunes which had come upon her, and had broken her heart, had come upon her because of her forgetfulness of God, and her unfaithful love for other gods.

Now you will agree with me when I say, that very serious consequences will follow upon a Church's being asleep. When a Church is asleep, the world waxes worse and worse. As a watchman, she ceases to lift up the voice of warning, and men sink deeper and deeper into bestiality and sin. As an instructress she ceases to instruct, and men grow ignorant of the highest truths. As the salt of the earth she loses her savour, and there is nothing to prevent the whole bulk of society sinking into a seething mass of corruption. While the Church is asleep, too, her

own domain gets wasted. Of this we have an example in this same book. God had caused a vineyard to be planted on a fruitful hill, but when the time came to expect grapes, lo! so great had been the neglect that the fences were broken down; the vines were trailing the ground; and, instead of grapes, luscious and full, there were but wild grapes, disappointing alike to the eye and to the taste. Thus, too, any Church which may fall guiltily asleep, is like a garden neglected; her walks are overgrown with grass; her borders become choked with weeds, instead of pleasant flowers; her fences are broken down; and the whole scene presents a picture of desolation which is all the more sad because of the traces of former beauty and care which remain. And while in this state she loses energy and power; there is also not that accession of young life to her midst which is necessary to replace with vigour the old lives which are growing disheartened, and which are passing away; and all the while evil influences are at work producing results that will take many years of work and prayer thoroughly to remove.

II. But let us notice in the second place that a Sleeping Church may nevertheless possess many elements of goodness and greatness, elements of beauty, charity, nobleness, and truth. The church of which the text speaks had, she had strength which she might put on, beautiful garments in which she might be clad, a dignified position which she might take. What possibilities lie hidden in the ground during its winter's sleep. Above we look upon nothing but ice and snow, but beneath this frostbound covering there lie

ten thousand germs of life, which, with the warm touch of spring shall quicken into colours that shall please the eye, into sounds that shall delight the ear, into food and nourishment for man and beast. Who, too, can estimate the possibilities of greatness which lie couched in the sleeping form of a little child ; you can gauge the strength of a sleeping lion, you know at the least how it can rage and tear, and you can prepare accordingly, but who can estimate the powers that sleep in a helpless babe. He may live to lead armies, to fire the hearts of his fellowmen with the fervour of his eloquence, to shape the future of his country, nay, to influence the destiny of the world. Is there not also in the face of the dead sometimes, that, which is suggestive of the power of the departed spirit in the world whither it has gone. I have myself before now looked upon the portrait of the great musical composer, Mendelssohn, as he lay dead in his bed, and as I marked the broad expanse of forehead, and those finely chiselled features, and thought of his wondrous gift of music, and of his pure and simple life, I could not help thinking how he would increase the volume and tone of heavenly music, as his spirit became conscious of its place in the heavenly choir. And who can tell what possibilities there may be in a sleeping church ! Under the meek demeanour of those who sit by your side, there may be a martyr's power of endurance, the spirit that adopts as its own the words of the Apostle Paul, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of

God." There may be hidden many a one possessed of power to serve God as a preacher, ably endowed with the gift of sacred oratory, the fire of heavenly eloquence. There may be much aptness to teach, gentleness like that of a nurse or a mother with her children. Yet on the outside of the church there are, perhaps, crowds of souls waiting like doves at their windows to be let in. Souls to whom no one has ever yet spoken the word of loving invitation, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without."

III.—We may now observe in the third place, The Call to awake that in our text came from God to this ancient Church by the voice of the Prophet. Ordinarily we are awakened out of our natural sleep in various ways. Sometimes we are suddenly startled by the cry of fire in the street, and we wake up alarmed for the safety of our neighbour's life and property. Sometimes we are awaked by a crackling sound and a stifling smell which tell us of danger in our own home. Sometimes by the bitter cry of anguish or of pain that comes from those who lie at our side; but oftener, thank God, after a night's sound refreshing sleep we wake up gradually in the morning to a consciousness of our own existence. And in various ways like all of these does God call us as Christians and as Churches to awake. Now, we are alarmed for the condition of the world, so full of suffering, of weariness and of strife, because so full of sin. Now, we are concerned for our own safety, and for our existence as churches; we are made to feel that if we fail to do the work God has given us to do, He will take it from us and cause it to be accom-

plished by another. He will remove our candlestick out of its place. And then we grow alarmed for the spiritual safety of those dear to us, and in the midst of our yearning for their salvation we are brought into a state of intenser earnestness concerning our own. And sometimes after a church has suffered much, and has been wearied and faint, and God has graciously led it aside, as the Saviour did his disciples, that in the midst of quiet it might rest awhile ; He has caused it gradually to gird on fresh strength for the work that lay before it.

IV.—We are now brought to notice in the fourth place, some of the privileges and duties of an awakened Church. There is the privilege of returning consciousness. It is a pleasant thing to wake up each morning to renewed life and health, with power to enjoy the sunshine or to brave the storm, to feel our daily work a pleasure and not a task ; and this is one of the pleasures of an awakening Church. There is the privilege of returning knowledge, the memory of all the accumulated experience of the past, and the knowledge that expands with the dawn of each new day. Not that either the one or the other comes to us at once in our waking moments. On the contrary, we wonder where we are, we ask ourselves what day it is, we try to remember what lies before us during its hours, and then, if we are wise, we arrange our plans, we gird on our strength and issue forth to the work of the day. And so an awakening Church is to ask itself,—what can I best do for my Lord and for the world in which and for which He lived and died. What lies nearest to me, close at my own doors, that I can do with the strength and the knowledge which

has come back to me renewed and increased to-day? In the text the Church is to gird on her strength, and with this she is to loose the bands of her neck, to cast aside all slavish fetters, be they worldly, courtly, golden, or traditional, that hinder her in pure and successful working for God. She is to shake herself from the dust, from the marks and remains of her former degradation, to shake herself from the dust of sloth, of uncleanness, of unkindness, and to say of all hard thoughts, of all unbelief, of all ungenerous feeling, of all pride and self-will,

Let the dead past bury its dead,
Act, act in the living present,
Heart within and God o'erhead.

The Church, in her new strength, is next to array herself in her beautiful garments—her beautiful garments of purity. They must be clean, we read in this same chapter, that bear the vessels of the Lord. The finest garments, if soiled, are unsightly, and remind us of the faded finery of a play actor; and so the most brilliant gifts with which a man may be endowed are comparatively useless in the Church, if they are allied with an impure soul and an unholy life. You know how it is said by Zechariah, concerning the last and best age of the Church, that upon the bells of the horses there shall be Holiness unto the Lord. Upon all the routine of the office; upon all the weights and measures of the shop; upon all tools and implements of trade; upon the going to market and the returning from market; upon the fore front of everything there shall shine

in letters of crystal purity—Holiness unto the Lord. The Church is to put on her beautiful garments of charity—the charity which thinketh no evil ; which suffereth long and is kind ; the love which tenderly regards a brother's sin ; and which, if led to reprove, does so, not with malignant gladness, but with sorrowful tenderness. For this spirit of Christian charity is as binding upon Christian men and women as is the command not to steal, or to bear false witness ; and yet how many of us there are who would scorn to lie or to cheat, yet who think it no sin to cherish hard and unjust thoughts concerning our brother ! The Church is to put on her beautiful garments of hope and faith. Hope is necessary to all successful working. It is this which carries a young man over the first trying years of business. Nor is Faith less necessary to high Christian enterprise. We, like Abraham, are called sometimes to go out, not knowing whither we go. We cannot always afford to wait, and coolly calculate the issues of our deeds. We must allow scope to high, holy, generous impulses, and a noble enthusiasm, into which both faith and hope largely enter.

Nor need the Church, in any of her works, be in an unseemly hurry, or give way to tremulous fears for her own safety. She may "arise and sit down," conscious of her own dignity, and of the power she has to bless men. She may feel sure the world cannot well do long without the essential truth she teaches. The old Greeks peopled their mountains and caves, the sea, the clouds, and the winds, with gods in whom they believed ; but there arose a set of philosophers who swept the winds, the clouds, the mountains, the caverns, and the sea, of the gods in which the

people trusted. But if something like this is being repeated in our day—if men, oftentimes more learned than wise, would sweep away our most cherished beliefs; we may content ourselves with the thought, that the world will soon grow weary of the frozen regions of doubt and unbelief, and will find its way back, in some form or other, to a belief in a Personal God—a Father in heaven—a Saviour of men.

There may be some here who are lulling themselves asleep in sin. Shall I close without one word to you? God says to you—Awake, thou that sleepest, and call upon God. I remember that when I was a boy, an old man took laudanum in order to destroy his life. When his friends found out what he had done, they brought him out of doors; they shook him; they walked him up and down the street; they tried to make him run; they used every means they could devise in order to keep him awake until the force of the poison had abated; but all in vain. The poison was too strong, and the old man sank into a stupor and died. My hearers, may not something like this take place spiritually? Are there no such things as spiritual opiates? There are; and it may be you are using them; flattering, soothing yourselves in sin. Beware lest the old man's fate be yours, and you die in your sins.

And can I, on this New Year's Sunday morning, wish anything better to you, my friends who compose this Church,* than that this year you may be unloosed from all slavish fetters; may be richly clad in all these beautiful

* Preeshenlle.

garments ; and that you may be free and vigorous to work the work of God, and strong and valiant to go forth to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

SERMON VIII.

THE IMPERCEPTIBLE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.”

LUKE xvii, 20.

THESE words form part of the reply given by our Lord to a question put to Him by some of the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God should come. The Pharisees were, as you know, continually about our Lord in His public teaching, and were frequently asking Him questions ; sometimes with the evil intent of entangling Him in His talk, but sometimes also, we are glad to think, prompted by a real desire to obtain knowledge on those matters pertaining to religion in which they were greatly interested. For, while we are not likely to forget that some of the greatest bigots and hypocrites, and consequently the most unjust and fierce haters of the Lord, were to be found amongst the Pharisees, it is but fair to remember also, that the sect comprised within it in those days some of the best of the Jews ; and that some of the choicest spirits of the early Christian Church were drawn from its ranks, and had received their early religious teaching in its schools. There is little or no evidence in the present case

by which to decide whether the question to which the text forms part of a reply, was put with a good or evil intent, or whether it was simply asked from curiosity ; but the reply itself may form a profitable subject for our meditation this morning.

I. Let us endeavour to understand what is meant and implied by the phrase **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**.

In its widest sense the Kingdom of God extends over all, and is an everlasting kingdom. We cannot conceive of a spot so remote as to be beyond the reach of God's power, and the rule of God's law. In the words of the Psalmist, we may truly ask " Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand uphold me." But the phrase Kingdom of God is used in a limited sense in the text with reference to God's moral kingdom among men on this earth, to God's sovereignty over spirits like Himself, to the living of human lives, and the transaction of human affairs in harmony with His eternal attributes of love, righteousness, and truth. Let us think of the Kingdom of God in the soul of man. As it ordinarily appears to us, the human soul is in a state of unnatural severance from its Maker, and, as a consequence, is in a state of war within itself. Most men are painfully conscious of a war in their members, the spirit warring against the flesh, and the flesh lusting against the spirit, passion dragging them one way and conscience pointing

them to another ; they are conscious of a struggle between inclination and duty, and of a remorse for sin. I use this word unnatural advisedly, for it appears to me that no word in the language has been more abused in its religious meanings than the word natural. Whatever is sinful, bad, beastly, devilish, is put down to the natural state of man ; whereas, unless the theory be true that the savage and half-brute condition is man's original state, and that the spiritual is an outgrowth, a higher development, of the *animal* man (the word used by the Apostle Paul in Corinthians ii. 14), nothing can be further from the truth. If it be natural for subjects to be in a state of revolt against a just sovereign, if it be natural for children to be alienated in affection from a wise and loving father, then the sinful condition of man is his natural condition, but not otherwise. I know some one may reply, that it must be our natural state, because we were born in it, and generations have been born in it. My hearers, no length of time can make a wrong thing right. Presuming that the state in which the Bible tells us man came from his Maker was his true, proper, and therefore natural, state, you will at once see that the state of sin into which he fell was an unnatural state ; that his children would be born in this disordered and unnatural state ; that the unnaturalness of the thing has gone on perpetuating itself from then until now : and the very fact that there is war in man's members so that he cannot sin with impunity, that he feels the pangs of remorse, and stands self-condemned, shows of itself that sin does not sit lightly and naturally upon him, and is also witness that he was made for something better.

Now, the coming of the Kingdom of God in the human soul, is the return of that soul to its allegiance to God ; is the return of its affections so long perverted to its Father in heaven ; is the subduing of the will so long selfish and insubordinate to its rightful authority ; is the restraining of passions, which, like a turbulent river, had broken loose from their channel, and desolated many a fair field of life, within their proper limits ; is the happy oneness in thought, purpose, and action, of the restored human soul with its Divine Maker.

We may next think for a moment or two of the Kingdom of God in the world. The state of the world is, alas ! but an expansion of the view we have just taken of the ordinary condition of the individual human soul ; just as in a dewdrop you may see mirrored the leaves, flowers, and grass surrounding it, so in each human soul may you see, as in a microcosm, a little world within itself, the ordinary condition of the whole of humanity. We see on all sides the oppression of the weak by the strong, the conflicting claims of class interests, the avaricious greed of wealth, the vain-glorious greed of dominion and power, empires based on unrighteousness, kings riding to thrones over battle fields stained with the blood and strewn with the mangled bodies of their fellow-men. As in the days before the flood forgetfulness of God by men led to the earth's being filled with violence, so now, men having forgotten their relationship and duties towards God, have, as a consequence, forgotten both their relationship and duties towards each other. Now, the coming of the Kingdom of God in a nation, or in the world, is the return of the people to pure lives and gentle manners,

to the strict observance of justice and honesty between man and man, the adoption of just laws for internal government, as well as a recognition of righteousness in the dealings of nations one with the other : the harmony of the whole world with heaven. As kingdoms, nations, empires, are made up of individuals, it follows that in proportion to the increase of the number of Godfearing men and women in any country, will be its position as a Christian country. Its government may profess Christianity, Christianity may be paid or supported by the state ; but if the mass of the people are not Christian, the country is not Christian. You can scarcely look at a Roman Catholic country on the continent of Europe without seeing an illustration of this, and as you notice the number and character of the rites and ceremonies with which religion is overladen, you are puzzled to know whether Christianity has indeed conquered the old Paganism, or whether the old Paganism has not rather conquered Christianity.

Let us also look at the kingdom of God in its ecclesiastical aspects ; in the particular shapes or forms of government which the purely spiritual associations of Christians may assume. If we had lived at the commencement of the Christian era, and had asked ourselves—What kind of outward organization, and government within themselves, will these knots of Christian believers assume ? I think we might have answered beforehand—It will be one in which the self-reliance, the judgment, the intelligence of each, and the widely diverse gifts and graces of all, may be brought into exercise, and made use of for the common good. Least of all should we think of the future Church

as an ecclesiastical machine to be turned only by a priestly handle. Now, when we turn to the facts recorded in the New Testament, we find that this would have been the true answer. We there see separate Churches, with their own peculiar habits and forms of worship, yet bound together by a common interest, having their own bishops or pastors, regulating their own affairs, and supporting themselves without any help from State. And, without saying that any form of Church government is explicitly laid down in the New Testament, we may safely say that the nearer we can approach the model of the Churches established in Apostolic times, the nearer we are to the truth, and the more do we realize the Divine ideal.

The coming of the kingdom of God, ecclesiastically, lies therefore in the return of the Churches which have wandered afar to the primitive model. This involves, as I believe, the abandonment of all false notions of priestly authority and sacramental efficacy, which are a sort of mixed Pagan and Jewish perversion of Christianity, and a hearty embrace of the reasonable faith, and simple, family-like observances of the first ages of our religion.

II. Having thus noticed some of the aspects in which we may understand the phrase "Kingdom of God," let us proceed, in the next place, to notice the manner of its coming, as this is described in the text. "It cometh not with observation:" not with outward show, noise, or demonstration. And is not this the way, my hearers, in which God works in nature! Grain by grain were these hills deposited in the waters of an ancient sea, slowly accumulating throughout long ages. Little by little were

the beautiful isles of southern seas built up by tiny creatures, who built at once their dwelling and their tomb. We are surrounded to-day by the fresh, bursting life of spring. Yet the very expression we use to express the rapidity of its growth, betrays our inability to mark its progress, as we say one to another, "We can almost see the things grow." True, God is the God of the storm, of the volcano, and of the earthquake. Yet even these violent and demonstrative exhibitions of the Maker's power are but the final results and outward manifestations of causes which have long been silently working unseen. So that His plan, both in the natural and the spiritual world seems to be, first a time, often long continued, of silent yet effectual preparation, and then an apparently sudden and marked accomplishment of the intended result. Thus it is with the coming of the Kingdom of God within us; and even when, to all appearances, the change in our hearts and lives is marked and sudden. For example, during a period of intense religious excitement, such as you have known, a man becomes converted, and we attribute his conversion, and he, too, perhaps does the same, to the preacher, the sermon, the excitement of the occasion; but we both too often forget the religious influences which reach far back into his history. The pure and tender influences of home; a father's robust and transparent piety; a mother's prayers and deep concern; a teacher's pleadings in the Sunday school; resolutions made in the freshness of life's morning, often broken, but renewed with returning and growing convictions: all or some of which influences culminate—are brought to a head,

as we say—under the religious excitement. There are bodies of men which have been embalmed, and have lain in Egyptian tombs between three and four thousand years. Some of these have been brought to this country, and there have been found bound up with cloth in which they have been encased, grains of wheat, which, when put into English ground, have sprouted, and grown, and ripened into the full ear under English skies. And so, methinks, it often is with influences secretly working, and thoughts and convictions which have long lain dormant in the soul, when they have been brought under the power of a faithful preacher, and the influential sympathy of others who are moved by an intense religious earnestness. And I think you will agree with me when I say, that of those who are brought into Church fellowship in such times of revival, they abide most faithful, the roots of whose religious life go farthest back, and spread widest out into the history of their past lives.

In like manner the kingdom of God grows in the world, not so much by noisy demonstrations, as by following the ordinary laws of growth, the growth as of the mustard tree, the silent yet effectual working of the leaven that is at last to leaven the whole lump. We expect our missionaries to be more immediately successful; we want to hear of numerous and striking conversions among the heathen, of nations being born in a day: and thus we too often forget that God may have other ways of working than those we prescribe for Him; like that, for example, by means of which the faith of the educated classes of India in their old systems of religion has been shaken, and they have been

compelled to adopt the most fundamental and principal articles of man's primary faith, that on this foundation, cleared of all heathen surroundings, God, as I believe He will, may raise a completer, warmer, and fuller religion than at present they seem inclined to accept.

The advance of right principles within the Church itself follows for the most part the same order. During several hundreds of years there was a departure from the simple faith and order of the Primitive Churches. The consequence is, that some portions of the Church find it needful to return to that primitive faith and order, and God works in unseen and unknown ways in helping His Church onwards, until at last the world is startled at the magnitude of the results. Take, for example, the growth of what is known as the voluntary principle in Scotland. In the earlier part of this century the only defenders of that principle were a very few and weak Independent and Baptist Churches, and to an ordinary spectator it would seem that if these were to die none would be left to witness for it. Yet how far would this have been from the truth? For meanwhile God was secretly and quietly showing the ministers of the Established Church in that land the utter incompatibility of Government help with freedom of action, until at last when matters were ripe, on one memorable day four hundred ministers of that Church forsook its emoluments for freedom, and gave birth to the most marvellous exhibition of the power of Christian voluntary effort the Church has known and the world has seen since the days of the Apostles.

Look also at the outburst of religious life and the

measure of the reforms which have taken place within the Established Church of this country during the last few years, and see how our brethren in that communion are adopting, it may sometimes seem unwillingly at first, but heartily afterwards, principles and practices we have been deeming almost exclusively our own. Weekly offerings, church and prayer meetings, lay preaching, abundant home mission work—yes, and even in many places a willingness to be made free from the trammels of the State. I said they were adopting these things heartily, and it is true. They work them with a zeal and efficiency which in many cases put us to shame, and the time may come when, from the growth of our own principles within themselves, and from the abundance of their zeal, they, leaving out extreme sections on either side, may turn to us and say, What truth of God do you contend for more earnestly or exhibit more clearly than we, and in what department of Christian labour does your practical godliness exceed ours? Let us not be envious at the sight, my brethren, but be stirred up thereby to increased love and good works. But let us also remember that those Christians will wield the most influence in this land in the future who, while they most clearly set forth the Apostolic faith, are most abundant in Apostolic works.

We have thus seen that religious growth is for the most part, and especially in its earlier stages, silent, slow, imperceptible, but it is no less true, that it is capable of being compared and contrasted at different periods of its development. And just as children now and then measure their heights against a wall to see how much they have

grown, have we, as Christians, need to ask ourselves, Do we grow, and is our growth symmetrical? Have we increased in knowledge, and with increased knowledge of God's will has there also come increased power to do it? We boast in these days of our liberality and breadth of thought, but this will be to little purpose, unless our thoughts and convictions have deepened as well. It may be that the stream of our religious life has widened and become noisier only because it is running over stony shallows. We have constant need to pray that we may grow in grace, and also that our growth may be "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Nor is it less true that growth may be stunted, repressed, perverted. The tender sproutings of the young wheat may be obstructed by stones, which a careful farmer picks out of his fields. Are any of you, my hearers, putting stones upon the gentle shoots of conviction in your minds? Will you go away from God's house to-day, and to-morrow try to depress all holy influences by casting the stones of worldliness, of drink, of sensual pleasure, of unbelief, upon them? The Lord in His mercy keep you from doing this. Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRISTIANS.

“Ye are a chosen generation ; a royal priesthood.”

1 PETER, ii., 9.

THE people to whom these words were addressed, though now “strangers scattered abroad,” were yet possessed of a history stretching far back into the past ; full of hallowed associations, and rich in sacred books ; the history of a nation connected by many marvellous links with Jehovah, the Eternal God, whom, more purely and intelligently than the nations around, they had worshipped, and whose sacred oracles they had preserved.

The Apostle Peter, throughout the whole of the passage, adapts his language and illustrations to the literature, associations, and traditions of his readers. Their forefathers had been a peculiar people, and they, under a higher dispensation, were called to be a chosen generation. Their nation had been singled out from amongst others to be a nation of priests ; and they also, in being called into the kingdom of Christ, at once became a Royal Priesthood.

The words are a quotation from the Old Testament, in the New. You will find the original of them in Exodus, xix., 5, 6, where we find Moses, as the mouthpiece of God,

saying to the Israelites—"Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation."

The object for which the Apostle quotes these words is evidently to shew, that as the whole Jewish people had been a kingdom of priests, so now much more the Christians, who formed a spiritual Israel, were to be to God, and before men, a kingdom of priests also. It may help us, my hearers, to decide for ourselves some of the questions which are agitating men's minds within the pale of the Christian Church, if, this morning, we enquire, first, into the office of a priest in its origin, duties, and history; secondly, into the meaning of the statement of the text as to the Christian Church generally; and, thirdly, into the general bearing of the whole subject upon the position and office of a Christian minister now.

I. We are to enquire into the office of a priest as to its origin, duties, and history; more particularly in the earlier years of the recorded history of the race.

The root of the word priest meant originally, to draw near; to set in array; with other similar offices, a little varied according to the special idea of the tribe or nation using the word. In a religious sense, it is the act of drawing near to God. It is the setting in array, or order, before Him, offerings for His acceptance, and requests for His favourable consideration. Looking at it from a purely human point of view, the office, with its acts, is a putting forth of the higher instincts of the race. It is a feeling after God, if haply

we may find Him. It is the outcome of that yearning after the invisible—that desire to know more than we can see—which lies deep within us. In very early times this feeling was coupled with the consciousness that man had sinned, did sin continually, and that God was justly angry with sin. Hence the desire to propitiate God by an act which was at once expressive of repentance and abhorrence of sin, and a token of the penitent's willingness to sacrifice, to give up everything, if only the Divine favour could be obtained.

In the earliest times men were their own priests. Thus Cain and Abel brought for themselves their offerings to the Lord. No man stood between them and their Maker. As families grew up, each father, if he retained a sense of the Divine presence, became a priest to his own family. Wherever the early wanderers pitched their tents and sojourned a while, there they raised an altar to the Lord: as the name of many a place in eastern lands witnesses still. Beautifully illustrative of this, as well as laden with lessons for fathers to-day, is the story told us of Job, who “sent for his sons and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” Then as families multiplied, we find the eldest son of the eldest branch becoming to the tribe its father and its priest. But this does not continue, nor is it the universal custom. Men appear in the midst of the different tribes who are contemplative, who are much in prayer, who become versed in the secrets of nature,

who see either by intuition or inspiration into the deep things of God, and who have the power of looking forward, and of anticipating events yet a long way off; whose characters are holy, so that their fellow men look up to them for guidance and instruction. They become priests by a process of natural growth, by the force of an irresistible law, by means of which men, when unblinded by prejudice or passion, will select those who are holier, wiser, and more gifted than themselves, to stand in their stead, to present their offerings, to set in array their wants, and to draw near to God for them. Amongst those early priests we often find two or more characters, or gifts, or offices united in the same man. Thus Melchizedec was king of Salem as well as priest of the Most High God. Potipherah, priest of On, was, as his name implies, a man who discovered secrets, one to whom secrets were revealed, as well as prince of the place from which he took his name. In a little sphere he was prophet, priest, and king. Balaam, a man of no common power, was gifted with the prophetic foresight as well as with the insight of a diviner, and the calling of a priest. In Egypt the children of Israel were brought into contact with an organized hierarchy of priests; and after their departure from that land, at the command of God one tribe from among the people was separated from the rest for priestly work, and from one family of that tribe, the family of Aaron, were the higher priests alone to be chosen. In the midst of an elaborate system of sacrifice and offerings, which, read in the light of the New Testament, was typical, the duties of priests became narrowed down. They became almost exclusively

sacrificiatory (indeed it is by the name of *sacrificiateur* they are known still in some languages), although they did not quite lose their mediatorial character. As the ages roll on, both the priests and their sacrifices, which were temporary, pass away, leaving the eternal truths of which they were the witnesses, and ushering in the fuller light of whose approach they were the heralds. The Old Testament sacrifices foreshadowed the self-sacrificing life and death of Jesus Christ, and lost their meaning and use when that was finished. The entering of the High Priest into the holy place prefigured the passing of Jesus into the heavens, into the holiest of all; and now that sublime fact is realized, the figure is useless, save as a relic of the past.

II. Let us proceed to notice the statement of the text as it affects the Christian Church generally. As Moses had spoken to the whole Jewish nation, Peter speaks to the whole Christian Church—to every man and woman in it—when he says, “Ye are a royal priesthood;” meaning, as I said before, that they were to be towards God and for men a company of priests. The word, too, has a higher meaning for Christians than it had for the Jews under the ceremonial law. Then a priest became almost exclusively a sacrificer; but Jesus Christ, as the head of His Church, restored the office to all its ancient comprehensiveness of meaning, and elevated each separate office included within it. He was in truth the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church, and through His Church of the human race at large. He did indeed take up and fulfil within Himself the work of sacrifice and mediation, which constituted the

especial work of a Jewish Priest, and therein lay the very core and essence of His work for men. But He did, and continues to do, more than this ; for when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sought among the ancient priests for one to whom he might most fitly compare the Lord Jesus Christ, he found the first type and pattern, not among the priests of the tribe of Levi, but in that more ancient priest Melchizedec, in whom Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, recognized the character of a priest of the Most High God ; who united the kingly and judicial office to that of a priest being “ King of righteousness, king of peace.” The Lord Jesus Christ is to us as Christians, the type and pattern of the priesthood to which we are to attain. As He was, so are we in this world. All that He was and is to the world, that in a lesser degree, we, as His representatives, are to be to men. As the few righteous men, whose presence would have saved Sodom, the Church of Christ is to be the salt of the earth which is to preserve it from corruption. The world’s sin and woe, its darkness and unbelief, are to enter and pierce our souls. At the sacrifice of self, and by the consecration of our powers to its service for Christ’s sake, are we to seek, to save, and to deliver it. Privileged to draw near to God as dear children, we are to carry with us unto the holy place, strong pleading, and yearning for the deliverance of our fellowmen from sin and sorrow. We are to give expression to the groaning of a creation burdened with death, and pain, and sin. We are to give a right direction to the blind groping after God ; the feeling after Him if haply it may find Him, which the more spiritual part of unfavoured

humanity is putting forth. Christians are to be tender-hearted in the midst of the world's callousness ; benevolent in the midst of the world's selfishness ; peaceable in the midst of the world's strife ; meek and enduring in the midst of the world's pride and rage : men who take hold with the one hand of the seen and felt world of matter, and living flesh and blood, and with the other hand of the unseen world of God and high spiritual natures, uniting in themselves the two.

What the Church is to be collectively, each believing man and woman is to be separately ; one to whom neighbours may look for wise words of peace in their strife, counsel in their difficulties, and spiritual guidance in their extremest spiritual needs ; one in whom they may see a pattern of holiness, the friend of God, the servant and friend of Jesus Christ. Each man and woman in the Church is, therefore, to live over again, as much as he or she may, the life of Him whose life was lived for men, and given at last as a ransom for many. You will see, my hearers, how to be, and to do all this ; there must be surrender of self ; there must be personal faith ; there must be constancy of devotion in prayer. You will agree with me that no Church privileges, or sacraments, can supply the need of these first and essential qualifications of priesthood.

But is each believer to be a priest and congregation in himself ? Is each one, however diverse his gift, or power of application, or intensity of devotion, to be illuminated in the same degree ? Does the Spirit of God take no note of natural endowments, of suitability of train-

ing, of application to study, and place all Christians on a uniformity of aptness to teach, and power to lead and govern? The text favours no such assumption. The Jews, equally with the Christians, were an assemblage of priests; and the words of the text were applied, as we have seen, originally to them. Yet had they their favoured leaders of thought, and a specially organized system of priesthood in their midst. Nor less in the Christian Church has the Lord set in its midst apostles, prophets, teachers, and various other workers, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Even when men throw off this arrangement, and depend upon the present operation of the Spirit of God upon their own minds and those of their fellow members, for the gift of teaching, that Spirit, true to His own regard for order and fitness, selects, with a remarkable sameness, those most gifted by nature and training for the power of utterance, and for the work of instruction.

It is sometimes said in our midst that the Christian ministry is not a priesthood. This is quite true as regards the Jewish idea of a priesthood. As an offerer of material sacrifices, after the Jewish fashion, there is no place for a priest in the Christian religion. We have one eternal Offering. We have one perpetual Priest. The Offering needs no fitful and weak renewal at human hands. The Priest needs not to stoop to sacrifice any more. I do not say it in bitterness or narrowness, but this is the time when I must say this—that when you look upon a Romish or Ritualistic celebration of the mass, you look, I will not

say upon that which is not *at all* a Christian sacrament, but I will say, that while you look upon what was originally a Christian rite, you look also upon that which has since been overladen and obscured by such a mixture of Jewish and Heathen ceremonies, that the Christian idea of it is nearly altogether lost.

While, however, it is quite true that in this restricted sense there is no place for a priest in the Christian religion, it is quite as true that in the higher meaning and more extended scope of the office, there is a place for priests of God still. Still there is need for men of God, who shall be to the Church of Christ what that Church itself is to be to the world out of which it has been gathered. Who are these men? How are they found? What are the marks by which we may know them, and by which we may judge of their pretensions? In what relation do they stand to the Church in its separate gatherings? We shall see.

III. I shall now be able, from this rapid survey of the subject, to offer some general reflections affecting the question of the Priesthood, as it is agitated in the present day. And we may start with this: Holiness is essential to the priestly office. Without holiness there can be no priesthood. To the words of the text, as they were originally given to the Jews, this condition of tenure of office is first of all laid down. They were to obey God's voice. They were to be an holy nation, in order to their becoming a royal priesthood. To the same effect are the words of Paul to Timothy—"A bishop must be blameless." And this, my hearers, fits in with our sense of what is right. We never, or ought never, to select men of lower standing in

mind and body than ourselves to go on a deputation for us. How much more preposterous the idea that men of less holiness, of less intellect, and of less knowledge than ourselves, can be priests of God to us. It is, at least, not God's way in nature. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? said the Master. "If any man" says an apostle, "have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is another utterance of Divine truth. You see how, if this be true, it cuts right at the root of the idea of the conveyance of a special grace, or sanctity, or power (a mysterious something, which those who claim to have it, ought at least to define), in the act of ordination. I would not for a moment undervalue that act. I think it both seemly and right that a public recognition should be made of the proved qualifications of a man for the ministerial office. But we cannot protest too strongly against the notion that, independent of character and gifts, a mysterious unction is given to a man, whether he will or no, and that he is made, altogether independent of himself, the channel of grace to souls godlier than his own. The theory is so repugnant to our sense of what is right, that it seems scarcely worth while to argue it, only that it is preached in pulpits and published in books so persistently that we are bound to oppose it. We are unobtrusively told that, just as streams of water flow the same through pipes of wood, or lead, or iron, so the blessings of religion flow to men through men who have been properly ordained as priests no matter what their character may be. It is not true. Men of unholy character are solid blocks of wood, or lead, or iron, through

which no water can flow. Their presence at the head of a Christian service is a hindrance, not a help, to the participants. Good does come to the latter, but it is because they worship with believing hearts and reverent souls. They are people to whom God has promised to look, and Christ has promised to come. But it is independent of him who calls himself their priest. He is in the way ; he stands in the light, and it would be better for the flock if such a shepherd would begone. You see also how the fact that holiness is essential to the office uproots also the idea, "once a priest always a priest." The priesthood vanishes when holiness departs. Nor less does it destroy the idea of a priestly unction which has flowed along an unbroken succession of priests from the beginning. If such a succession were necessary, the Head of the Church would have taken care that its completeness should be apparent and easy of proof, which you know is at present very far from being the case. But put an unholy man anywhere in that line of priests, and you block up the channel, and the unction will not flow. It is far better that it should be so. It is well for us that the evidence of the reality of our spiritual life does not depend upon our ability to trace our spiritual pedigree, but upon the knowledge we have of the health, and vigour, and joy which we have within us to-day.

We may learn also, that the end for which the office of a priest was instituted was greater than the office itself. We see this again and again in the Old Testament history. The most priestly acts we read of in that book were done by, what many would deem, unpriestly hands. Take the

case of Samuel, a descendant of the very Korah whose dreadful end is so often held up as a warning to irregular preachers. Does he not seem to be to the people, prophet, priest, and king? The most important sacrifices seem to be offered by him, and the high priest himself sinks into a cypher. Look, again, at Solomon. When the first temple is to be opened, he it is who takes upon his heart to God all the present and future needs of the people, and offers the people's temple to the people's God. Look, once more, at that solemn trysting scene on the top of Mount Carmel, when the prophets of Baal are confronted by a solitary servant of God. Who is it that builds the altar and arranges the sacrifice? Who is it that pleads with God for his covenanted people? Is it the high priest, who has been fetched from Jerusalem? Is it even one of the tribe of Levi? No; it is Elijah the Tishbite, "who was of the inhabitants of Gilead," a man possessing to the full, true priestly qualifications without belonging to the priestly tribe. Thus we learn that class privileges must be held subsidiary to the wants of the race. Class privileges are temporary, may be forfeited, but the needs of the race are permanent. Then, as if to give a final blow to the idea that the priesthood was to be a caste perpetuated by and within itself, when He came, who was to be in Himself the offering and the priest, Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, He came, not of the priestly tribe of Levi, but of the royal tribe of Judah; not of the family of Aaron, but of the house and lineage of David. We find illustrations of the truth I am stating, too, in the early history of the Christian church. Take, as an example, the case of Philip

the Deacon, and of those who, scattered abroad on the persecution of Stephen, went everywhere preaching the word. And, in the way in which God manifestly blesses the labours of men to-day, who lay no claim to belong to an organized and close corporation of priests, to the purifying, comforting, and strengthening of human souls, we are taught that the title to the priestly or ministerial office lies not in the possession or reception of hereditary right, nor even of official recognition, but in the possession of the necessary qualifications, mental and spiritual, to perform for men and before God, the larger duties foreshadowed in the ancient office of a priest.

We learn also that the way in which a man becomes a priest to any number of human souls naturally differs according to the religious condition in which those souls are. The Church of Christ collectively is, as we have seen, a priest for the world before God whether the world will or no. The relationship can hardly be said to be mutual. So without any previous solicitation or selection on their part, a missionary becomes a priest to the heathen, or to a portion of the neglected population of town or country at home. Religious life is, so to speak, thrust upon them. They use no voice in choosing the man who is to be a priest of God to them, because they have little or no spiritual life. But by and by the case alters. Spiritual life is quickened within them, knowledge and thought grow—it may be, outgrow those possessed by their first teacher. They outstrip him in zeal, in devotion, and in natural gifts, which are sanctified by the Spirit of God. It is possible that they may discover that the man who was fitted to be

their spiritual nurse in the days of their infancy, is not fitted to be the leader of their spiritual manhood. It is so with all life. We have no voice in our birth. We depend not less for our mental growth than we do for our bodily sustenance, upon those who have lived before us; but a day comes to us all when we must put forth a separate will, and when we must think, choose, and decide for ourselves. We see then that while for the ignorant and those out of the way, a minister must be chosen and sent by those who are already in the way; whenever a Christian society has attained experience, knowledge, and activity, no man can be a priest of God to it who is not the man of its choice and confidence. There must be spiritual affinity, and the relationship must be mutually agreeable, otherwise it is non-natural and comparatively useless. Need I add that generally he must be in advance of his people in Christian knowledge, experience, and holiness, if he is to influence their souls for good. The ancient priests were to be without blemish, men physically complete; and spiritually holy—men who were the better priests because they shrank not from the relationship of husband and father. I tremble sometimes when I think how much is required now from the humblest minister of Christ, from the least of those who put their hands to holy things. He is expected to be a man who thinks and feels for others, gifted, able to comprehend, and put in order, and express the wants of his brethren, and to explain the deep things of God. He must be filled with holy love. He must be aglow with heavenly enthusiasm. He must be prayerful, generous, patient, and wise. Who is sufficient for these things? Who, but he

who has already given himself in full consecration to God, who is judged by his brethren to possess the requisite gifts, who feels the love of Christ constraining him, and who hears the inward call. For "No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

SERMON X.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND ITS REWARD.

“If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.”

JOHN xii. 26.

IN these words our Lord takes for granted two things, first, that work is natural and proper for man, and secondly, the distinction between master and servant, employers and employed, which hitherto has existed amongst men. We are wrong when we suppose that work and all the activities of life are the result of an early curse. Before human nature had *advanced* to disobedience by the proud and perverse exercise of its own will and knowledge, there was a garden immediately around it which it was to keep and dress. Indeed, work was the earlier and wider condition on which man was to possess the earth. “He was to subdue it.” In which word there is, as you know, implied effort and conflict, before the victory comes. Sin, alas, has made work labour and toil. It has weakened the human frame. It has shut out the thought of God’s companionship in our work. It has made us ignorant and unmindful of the laws of life, the knowledge and observance of which is necessary to our true existence here. It has

brought in its train selfishness, oppression, deceit, and every form of wrong ; so that both socially as well as individually, the early curse bears a fearful import. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Our Lord also, as I have said, takes for granted the distinctions which have grown up and prevailed hitherto amongst men, as masters and servants, employers and employed. Many attempts have been made at different times to level these distinctions ; but such attempts have always failed, because they do violence to the instincts of our nature. Not less have they seemed to be unjust to the industrious, the intelligent, and the gifted members of a community, by degrading them to the level of the lazy, the ignorant, and the stupid ; while they have taken away from the former the zest for work and fresh effort, by robbing them and theirs of the natural reward of their toil. But not less does our Lord assume in these words the principles of fairness, of mutual goodwill, of faithfulness, and of friendship which should underlie, and distinguish all such relationships. His servants were His friends. He was their companion and helper in all faithful service ; and they were to share with Him the final heavenly reward. The earthly relationships are to be after the pattern of the heavenly and spiritual relationships, while we have sufficient indications, that these, in their turn, are the continuation, on a higher level, and for higher purposes of the earthly relationships. We have to think, to-day, then, of Christian Service and its Reward.

I. Christian Service, which is the service of God in Christ. Where is its sphere ? What is its scope and de-

sign? What are its divisions of labour? What is the spirit in which it should be entered? These are some of the questions concerning it, to which I would give a brief answer to-day. I need hardly say that this earth is the place in which the work is to be done. It is into the *world* that the Lord sends His servants, even as He came into the *world*. The Lord's vineyard is around us. The fields on every side of us are white unto the harvest. But what is there to do spiritually and morally in this world which God has made? Rather, my hearers, reverse the question, and ask what is there not to be done? Whichever way men look at it—whether they think human nature is degraded from what it once was, or whether they think it has not yet killed the “ape and the tiger” which lie within it, and that it has not yet advanced to what it may and will become, one thing is certain, that for the most part it is in a very sad and deplorable condition. Look at it on what level we will, we see that it is away from God, and travelling fast to ruin. There is too much of the animal with its dominant passions. Where there is intellect there is too often pride and much lack of soul. Men are in danger of losing their souls in this world and for evermore. Into such a world Jesus Christ came—to seek and to save the lost. Into such a world he sends us, and we are to be in our degree, and according to our capacity, the Saviours of men, as He was. This we are to be by leading men back to the Father through Him. I have lately seen with much interest two companion pictures: in the first, a shipwrecked woman has just reached, in the midst of the fury of the sea, a rock, which rises in the

shape of a rude cross above the surging of the waves ; she has thrown her arms around it, and clings to it for very life, and her words are, "Simply to Thy Cross I cling." In the other picture she is more firmly fixed upon the base of the rock, and with one arm clasping the cross she has stretched out the other for the rescue of a drowning sister, whom she is now drawing to share her own place of safety. How admirably do these pictures set forth the Christian's privilege and duty. Clinging to the Cross of Christ, sheltering ourselves under the Divine love, of which it is the precious symbol, we shall feel that we are saved in order that we may save others, by bringing them under its gracious influence, and by leading them to trust in the righteous love of God, as it is seen in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Then, the souls thus saved from perishing need to be clothed with spiritual raiment, to be fed with spiritual food, and to be armed with spiritual weapons. In attempting to accomplish all this there is ample scope for the Christian service of which the text speaks. No less is there room for a great diversity of operations, which are moved and influenced by the one Spirit.

There is the service of Teaching—the teaching a Christian mother may give to the child that nestles in her bosom, and plays at her feet, and catches eagerly at her words : the teaching of Christian youths or maidens to the dear children who gather around them in the Sunday school : the teaching of friend by friend, as they walk through life in close companionship. There is also the service of Thought, as with strong minds, well cultured and disciplined, Christian men withdraw from the busy activi-

ties of even Christian work, in order that they may search out, and set in order for their fellow men, the deep things of God. There is also the service of Work ; the work of Christian organization, for those who are methodical, and patient, and contriving, as they move in the midst of our various societies, as a skilful engineer would amidst the shafts, and wheels, and cranks, of a great complication of machinery, seeing that each is able and suitable for its work. Nor less important here is the work of Christian benevolence. There is the service of Taste, by which everything in the service of the Lord's House may be done decently and in order, pleasantly to the eye, agreeably to the ear, and in full accord with the most elevated piety and refinement of culture. I know that I am here treading upon dangerous ground, and that is a perfectly legitimate fear which dreads the materialism of ritualistic worship ; but surely, my hearers, there is a happy mean between the slovenliness and desolation observable in some places of worship, and the half-idolatrous gaudiness of others. True Christian hearts will seek this higher and better way. They will feel that we have no right to deface God's fair earth, and to darken God's blue sky, with unsightly houses of prayer : that we have no right to make discord amidst the higher music of creation, by uttering jarring sounds in the worship of Almighty God : and, avoiding all false and tawdry ornament, they will feel that there is still a place for the beautiful, and for the highest and tenderest sentiments of the heart, like those which Mary displayed in the gift of the precious ointment—in the holiest and highest acts in which man can be engaged here. There is the

service of Preaching—one of the highest to which God calls His servants, and one that demands the complete consecration of the best powers of man. And there is also the service of Suffering, to which God calls many of His people: the service of those who are called to bear always pain or feebleness of body; the service of the patient endurance and meek resignation of those who are permitted only to look out of the windows of their homes upon the busy activities of Christian service, but who are not permitted to take any part in them. The Lord and the Church have need of them also; for perhaps the latter would lose much of the tenderness of its love, were it not for the suffering souls there are ever in its midst.

And what should be the spirit in which we should enter upon this service, my hearers? Should it not be in the willing constraint of love? Drawn to Christ by love which has been kindled in our hearts by the thought of His love to us, we should be ready to say with the Apostle—"The love of Christ constraineth us;" and to joyfully sing, as we engage in work for Christ's sake—

In a service which Thy love appoints,
 There are no bonds for me;
 For my secret heart is taught the truth,
 That makes Thy children free:
 And a life of self-renouncing love
 Is a life of liberty.

Nor less are we to undertake the service in the spirit of self-denial. "If any serve Me, let him follow Me;"—"If any man come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me;" these are the words of

the Master, and we must be ready to take up our pilgrim's staff and forsake many of the pleasures of the world ; we must be ready even to take up the cross that thwarts our inclinations, and crosses our purposes if we would always worthily follow our Lord. For even Christ pleased not Himself. He steadily set His face towards Jerusalem, though He knew full well that a cross stood at the end of the way, and the more earnestly we follow the Master, the more apparent will our pilgrim character, and the more real will the cross we have to bear, become. Many of the pursuits and amusements, which a man, who simply wants to escape hell and get to heaven, thinks he may follow and indulge in, will be forbidden to us ; because they stand in the way of our usefulness, lower the tone of our piety, and weaken the spiritual power we may exert over our fellowmen. Thus, the closer we follow Christ, the higher will be the tone of our morality. That which might do for the man who simply rests on the foundation, will not satisfy those of us who strive to build a superstructure, whose fair and strong proportions shall abide through all eternity.

II. What is the reward of Christian service ? " Little enough," I think I hear some one reply, and in a sense the answer is quite true. We often get but little thanks from those whom we seek to serve for Christ's sake, and we are not the first who have found it to be so. Others have asked before us. If I seek honour among men, where is my honour ? Well, we are content. Even if no reward at all were held out to us, we should feel constrained to serve Christ. But the Lord knows us and loves us too well, to leave us to toil without hope of reward. He has

made us to value a reward as a recognition by others of our labour, apart from whatever worth it may have in itself, and in the text he encourages us in our work by the promise, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

I wish before considering the nature of this reward to ask this question. Was this promise, with the other promises which the Lord gave to those around Him ; such as "Lo I am with you always;" "I go to prepare a place for you;" "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you;" "Peace I leave with you;" with many others I might quote, intended only for the twelve Apostles, or for the whole multitude of disciples then and through all time? Perhaps you wonder, my hearers, that I should think it necessary to ask such a question. Yet it is needful to ask the question, for upon the answer depends the validity or absurdity of those claims to priestly authority of which we hear so much in these days. By those who make such claims, the promises are limited to the twelve Apostles, and to those who should be properly appointed to succeed them. They and these are to be the stewards of the mysteries of God. Outside this charmed circle, the grace and unction is not to flow. Those within are to dispense as much or as little as they choose of these covenanted blessings, and we whose lot on earth is cast on the outside, are to thankfully receive such crumbs of comfort as those within are pleased to bestow. Alas for the pretensions of such spiritual pride! Our Lord in the text gives a death blow to all such assumptions. "If *any* man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am there shall also My servant be."

Nor can you read the writings of the apostles without discovering very soon, that they themselves understood the promises as given and belonging to all the faithful, and limited only by the power of appropriation possessed by each separate soul.

What, then, is the special character of the reward to which the text seems to point? Is it not this, the promotion to a *higher service* in the presence of the Lord. The heaven where the saints are to be with Christ, and are to be made like Him, is, as we learn from other parts of Scripture, to be a place of rest. Those who reach there are to "sit down;" and it is to be a place of glory, for they are to "sit down with Christ on His throne;" and it is to be a place of joy, for the faithful servant is to "enter into the joy of his Lord;" but it is also to be a place of service, for Christ is there as the servant as well as the Lord of men. Why should it not be so? Shall there be no scope for the activities of the soul? May we not rather conceive that while revelation after revelation shall be made to the thoughtful mind, while the quiet loving heart may have its fill of joy as it sits like Mary at its Lord's feet, there will also be an outlet for the poetry of a Milton, for the music of a David, for the philosophy of a Newton, and for the benevolence of a Howard, if not in the precise form these took on earth, yet in others.

There are dear children in heaven who have need to be taught of the Saviour through whose love they have been delivered from the curse of sin before they knew its power. There are men like Apollos, who need to be instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly. There

are devout and just men, like Cornelius, from every nation under heaven, who need to be told of the Divine love for which on earth they yearned, but of which, unlike Cornelius, they were never told. There are souls like those of the Athenians, who had felt they must have a God, even though he be to them an UNKNOWN GOD, who will need to be led into His very presence. And there are also, let us willingly believe, myriads from among the nations who, in their striving to do the law, "have shewn the work of the law written in their hearts," who will have need to be told of Him who has fulfilled the righteousness of the law for them. Indeed, who can tell what work God, in the infinite fulness of His love, in the far-reachingness of His plans, and with all His mighty array of worlds, may not have for that church to accomplish hereafter, which redeemed from among men on the earth, is to be to Him a "kind of first fruits of His creatures."

Nor are Christ's servants without their reward even here. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." The Christian love which prompts to deeds of mercy carries with it its own reward. A life of holiness and kindly deeds will at last wring even from the most ungodly a sign of approval, and there is also that answer of a good conscience towards God, which is in itself an abundant reward.

Let us note also, for our encouragement, the oneness between Christ and His servants, which is expressed in the text, "Where I am there shall also My servant be." Christ with them here; they with Christ there. He sharing their toil; they sharing His glory. In the midst of the smoke of the battle, and in the thickest of the fight,

the Christian warrior hears the words of his Lord, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne." On the road, by town and pleasant land, in dark nights, and under scorching heat, along dusty ways and up steep ascents, the Christian pilgrim is cheered by the voice he hears saying, "Lo I am with you," "My grace is sufficient for thee." In the ordinary service of life; in benevolent service wrought in the abodes of poverty, of vice, of misery; in work wrought for Christ amidst scorning and contempt; the Christian servant is borne up and cheered by the words which have travelled to him through the long ages, and which come also direct from Heaven to-day,—“If any man serve Me let him follow Me, and where I am there shall also My servant be.”

SERMON XI.
THE TERRESTRIAL GLORY AND THE
GLORY CELESTIAL.

“ There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial ; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.”

1 CORINTHIANS, xv. 40.

WE have all heard these words read in some of the saddest seasons of our lives. They have come to us laden with hope, as we have laid in the ground all that was left of the earthly remains of those we love. It may at such times have occurred to you, as it has done to me, that underneath the comfort the whole chapter contained there lay a deep and true philosophy, which tended to harmonize the purest instincts and devoutest hopes and longings of the human heart, with all else that we know of law and arrangement in creation around us.

Throughout the whole of this argument the apostle relies upon the order and fitness of things everywhere prevailing, to show that the resurrection body will be a fit habitation for a redeemed and glorified spirit. That the resurrection itself will not be anything anomalous—without law—or exceptional in creation ; but that it is provided for in the

general order of things. He is also careful to guard his readers against the idea that it is necessary to the thought of a resurrection, that precisely the same materials as those laid in the ground shall enter into the composition of the future body. "Thou sowest not that body which shall be." And again, "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him." The body we put into the ground is too often but the wreck—the worn and wasted remnant of the body we once knew and loved: the colour is gone, the beauty is faded; tissue and muscle are wasted; and even this remnant shall be dissolved—into liquid, into gases, whence it may pass into flowers, and leaves, and wood, and fruit, and it may be into a future human body. But the Apostle's teaching is, that from the matter of the Universe in which this earthly body has already in part, and before long will altogether have merged, God will give to the spirit—the intelligence—so lately separated from it, a body, which may both preserve the identity of the old, and be suitable to the new and advanced condition of the soul's existence.

In endeavouring to gather up the teachings of the text, let us consider—

I. The way in which the Apostle viewed the works of God in creation.

There are men who look at nature with only the bald precision of scientific research—who content themselves with counting the number of ribs on a shell, or the number of petals in a flower, or in detailing the appearance of the rocks, and clouds, and measuring the distances of the stars, with a mathematical exactness; but who have no eye for beauty or for symmetry, and no heart to trace the

adaptation, the design, and all the other marks of a Presiding Intelligence, which nature in her manifold aspects presents. Having assigned to the object of their inquiry its place amongst other objects, they are satisfied, and they are content to stifle their emotions and starve their souls ; as they lay by *their* part of creation on the shelves of a museum, or in the drawers of a cabinet, labelled and done for. May we not well exclaim of such, however much we may love nature ourselves, My soul, come not thou into their secret ! Then there are men constitutionally opposite to these. Men who would shudder at the dissecting knife ; who never looked through a microscope or telescope ; who never, with ponderous hammer, chipped rocks, and gave to them barbarous names, or counted the parts of a plant ; but to whom, nevertheless, nature is all soul. Its flood of light ; the deep blue, and fleecy clouds of the sky ; the gorgeous colours and grouping of the trees, and shrubs, and flowers, and all the variations of the landscape, are bursting with the fullness of hidden meaning to them, and are the outward symbols of deep mysterious thought ; the outer and distant echoes of yearning voices within the depths of their own being. And, thank God, there is a higher class of men than either of these, in whom there dwell, in happiest combination, all the qualities which other men possess only in part ; whose souls are not absorbed by their intellect, and the grasp of whose intellect is not impaired by the strength of their emotion, and who, to the exactitude of the philosopher and the tenderness of the poet, having added the reverent faith of a Christian, inquire still further,—What do all these

things which I see and hear above, below, and around me teach me concerning myself ; my place in the midst of them all ; my relation to the great Cause of all causation ; and of my destiny in the future ?

For surely, my hearers, this is not only a legitimate enquiry for an intelligent being like man, but one which ought ever to be of the highest interest to him. His question should not be—How little may I know and believe concerning myself in these deep questionings of my soul concerning God, life, death, and eternity ? but, how much ? He is not to repel such questionings ; to put his fingers on his lips, after the fashion of some men, and say—“ Hold ; it is enough ; I cannot tell ; I do not know ; I only know what I see.” In doing so, he would be inconsistent with himself ; for, in scientific enquiry, little would have been discovered if men had not sometimes drifted off from the shore of the known, to cast about hither and thither for the shores of the unknown. In scientific language, men must sometimes leave the sure path of inductive reasoning, for the more uncertain region of hypothesis, of conjecture, of speculation. They must walk sometimes by faith, as well as by sight, if they would discover all that may be known. I may say with truth, I think, that much of the knowledge which is held as certain and sure by the world to-day, has been discovered by adventurous spirits in this way. Surely, then, when we approach the region of spirit and mind, with all its crowd of hopes, passions, longings, and desires, we shall do well to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing ; to ask earth, air, and sea, that they may answer us, and yield to us, if we are

reverent seekers, both confirmation and elucidation of the teachings of Scripture. In this, their sublimest light, the Apostle Paul looks at them in this chapter. And if you read the Old Testament carefully, you will see that it was in this light that the ancient writers of those books looked at them also. As some one has truly said, they begin by adoring God's wonders in creation, and end by extolling His wonders in grace; an example of which we have in the sublime words of the Psalmist: "Marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. . . . How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them."

II. Let us notice how the unity and oneness of God's works are implied in the words of the text. There is, indeed, a difference, both in kind and degree, in the glory of each, as I shall point out presently; but each part of creation yields its own share of glory to the common store, and all the different glories commingling make one grand psalm of praise. This is the view taken by the Old Testament writers. "All Thy works praise Thee." "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." The more, too, men master the secrets of nature, and the more they are able to understand the laws by which all creation is governed, the more do they discern the otherwise invisible chain by which all things are bound together in mutual interdependence, and in a beautiful unity of purpose and plan. Light, heat, electricity, though separate and distinct for many purposes, are yet linked together by many points of contact. The gases and substance of which this earth is composed have

their affinities and points of union. The tiny flower turns instinctively towards the light which first started on its course millions of miles away. Nay, more. The beautiful experiments of modern science have shewn us that the light which twinkles in the stars has much in common with the light which it is a pleasant thing for our eyes to see ; and, still further, that that light is tinged and coloured by matter diffused in celestial atmospheres, or emanating from the substances of which each planet is composed, which are similar substances to those with which we are familiar on our own earth, though probably in different proportions and combinations. The apparently simple law by which an apple or a stone falls to the ground in the direction of the centre of the earth, is the same power by means of which worlds the most distant are held together. The least disturbance of this power here would at once be felt to the remotest boundaries of creation. A beautiful instance of this is connected with the somewhat recent discovery of one of the planets of our own system. An astronomer noticed that at a certain point, one of the planets invariably turned aside from its true course, though, after a while, by making a considerable bend, it came back again, and went on its ordinary way. He was hence led to suppose that there must be a strong attractive power, in the direction of this deviation from the right path. Following up his supposition, by a number of very exact calculations, and then looking in the direction indicated by the result, he was rewarded at last in discovering the cause of this aberration in the existence of an important planet, which now figures as one of our own

system. Nor does the unity end here, for both reason and revelation forbids the supposition that these worlds of magnitude and order are empty, tenanted globes. On the contrary, we are forced to the conclusion that amongst the worlds of starry light, myriads more of God's intelligent creatures may be found, compared with whom "the nations of this earth are as a drop in a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance." Now, as Christian teachers, and learners, we too often lose sight of these teachings of nature, or regard them as if they were beyond the province of the minister's work, and altogether beyond the region of the sanctuary. We can hardly tell how much we lose by this conduct; for, I am persuaded that great confirmation of our faith, and strengthening of our hope, may be derived from a contemplation of the vast creation, and of the subtle and mysterious links which bind all its parts together. For example, may we not enquire with force and propriety: if there be a oneness of matter between all the worlds which float in space, and if there be, as there is, a oneness of those ethereal and invisible forces which bind all together; why may there not be a community of mind, of thought, of intelligence, between all worlds also? Are the links to be rudely snapt and broken the moment we reach the higher phases of creation, and are the analogies which held good in the lower and more ponderous masses of matter, to cease altogether when we reach the more spiritual and refined? Shall there exist everywhere a oneness of heat, and light, and electricity, of salt, and potash, and iron, and shall the connection cease, and the unity be broken, the moment we speak of that mind of

man which on earth can control, and mould, and re-arrange all these forces, both visible and invisible? Has it no affinities with *bodies celestial*, and together with these, intelligences of, it may be, more ethereal essence, and more spiritual nature than its own, with the Divine source of all mind and intelligence whatsoever. To me, it seems, as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural to answer "No" to such enquiries. We see at once, then, how there may be a place in nature for angelic beings, for heavenly visitors, armed with marvellous comforting power; for ministering spirits sent to minister to the heirs of salvation; how the vision of Jacob, on the rocky steps of Bethel, may be a true picture of that intercourse between world and world, which is going on around us every day. Nor less probable is it that there is a place in nature also for those visions of the heavenly glory; such as Stephen saw, as he was about to die his martyr's death; and such as many dying saints, some of whom we ourselves have known, have to their great joy beheld, as they have drawn near to the confines of the eternal world. Is there not also scope for the operation of the Spirit of God on human spirits having so many affinities with Himself. And surely, the power which gently bends the plant towards the light that gladdens and invigorates it, will listen to the audible cry of sin, of want, and of weakness, as it rises from the souls of its own creatures. Can we conceive of anything so anomalous in creation, as the spectacle of a congregation of human souls confessing its sins, and earnestly, longingly, yea, passionately, praying for power and help to live in harmony with pure eternal law, and yet every power, influence,

and intelligence in the universe and the Almighty source of all Himself turning away with cold, cruel indifference, from its strong cryings and tears? We cannot. For one, I would rather be anything, even—

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,

than believe anything like this. But we need not come to such a cold negation of belief, my hearers. Both nature and revelation teach us, if we read them aright, that we are not isolated atoms, drifting away into nothingness, but human souls, on our way, if we will, to the fulness of the life of God.

III. I will proceed to notice that each part of creation has its special glory, by which it is known and for which it is distinguished.

“There is,” as the Apostle says, “one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory.” “The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” The difference, in the Apostle’s mind, lay chiefly between earthly bodies or objects, and the heavenly bodies or objects, which the blaze of day or the midnight sky revealed to his gaze. With our increased knowledge, however, of the works of God in creation, we may fitly extend the difference between the natural objects or bodies, which are seen, and all those subtler and more mysterious forces of nature which lie beyond our ordinary sight. There is the glory of the human body—of its wondrous mechanism, its symmetry of shape, and its face divine; and there is the glory of the diviner mind of man, with its power of

memory, of anticipation, of imagination, of invention, with all its mysterious outgoings, its instinctive reverence, and its longings after the infinite, the unknowable, and the unknown. There is the glory of the natural features of the earth, with its sea and land, mountain and plain, river and rock ; and there is also the glory that clothes all these in a thousand hues, all harmoniously blending. There is the glory of the myriad forms of living things which the earth sustains ; and there is also the glory of that marvellous light in which all live, and in which, and by means of which, all their varied glory is seen. There is the reflected glory of the moon's pale light. There is the more distant glory of the stars, twinkling and sparkling like gems set in crystal spheres ; some of them partakers of light derived from the sun, and some of them suns themselves, shedding forth their own light on far distant orbs. There is the glory of our own sun, which is, as far as we know, original and underived. Not least of all, is there that glory which pertains to those invisible forces, of which I have spoken before—heat, electricity, and the mysterious power we call gravitation, which, with its kindred forces, holds and binds the whole creation together.

Each of these parts and forces of creation possesses its own glory ; but if we consider each in comparison with the others I think we shall find that the more ethereal, subtle, and spiritual the force is, the greater is the degree of glory pertaining to it ; because we shall find that these mysterious forces govern, control, suffuse, and vivify the more solid and ponderous masses of creation. Turn the stream of heat quite away from our globe, and every living thing

upon it—plants, animals, and men, with all their glory—must perish and die. Divert every ray of light, so that it may not reach this earth, and nearly the same result must follow. Snap the far-reaching cord of gravitation, and at once this earth, with stars and suns and systems of worlds, will rush into each other to their utter destruction. I might multiply examples ; but I have said enough to show you that the invisible, the unseen things of nature, govern the seen. They are universally present. They have inconceivable rapidity of flight and of action. They possess irresistible force.

Yet is there, as we have seen already, in man something more spiritual, more subtle, and in many respects more powerful, than many of these ; that which is able to control, to counteract, and to direct them. Here, then, we have again reached a point where we may resume our questioning, and again pursue our analogies. Shall these forces of nature be everywhere present, and their superior, the mind, the soul of man, be evermore chained to one spot of earth ? Shall they endure evermore, and it go out at death, like a light quenched in darkness ? Shall undulations of light, and vibrations of sound, repeat themselves in regions far distant from the place of their origin, and shall the emotions of a human soul, and the aspirations of the spirit of man, be stifled, quenched, smothered, within the bounds of its own consciousness ? No ! no ! Bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial, with the glory belonging to each, unite with revelation to give us an answer far better than this.

IV. We may now, perhaps, consider for a little while

how the thoughts in which we have been indulging, help us to solve in some measure many of the difficulties we sometimes feel respecting the transit of the human spirit which has just left the body, to its heavenly home. We say in very beautiful words

In vain the fancy strives to paint
The moment after death ;
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath.

One gentle sigh his fetters break ;
We scarce can say he's gone,
Before the willing spirit takes
Its station near the throne.

But reason asks—How can this be ? The destination of the soul may be thousands of millions of miles away. How, then, can the intervening space of walls, of cloud, of storm, and of the thick darkness which lies beyond the luminous atmosphere of earth, be traversed ? The glory celestial has an answer ready even for this question. Space is nothing to the electric fluid. We may hold converse, by its means, with a friend five thousand miles away ; and if the intervening space were five thousand millions of miles, the interchange of thought between mind and mind might be instantaneous and continuous, as fast at least as the power of expression. Space is nothing to the force of attraction, by which, as we have seen, the creation is held together. The least disturbance of this invisible force anywhere would be immediately felt everywhere. Why,

then, should not an intelligence going out of a dying human body here, kindle up instantaneously in the world, distant or near, where God garners up His saints? Nor is there anything unreasonable in the thought, that as the hour of departure comes, and the soul lingers awhile in the body, it should come, in part at least, under the operation of the laws, and of the glory of the celestial sphere to which it is about to be transferred; and that, before its rarefied mental vision, space and time should be annihilated. As it goes out on earth, stone walls, and doors with bars and bolts, hinder not its exit, any more than they bar the progress of those ethereal forces of which I have spoken. It trembles not in the howling of the stormy wind. It shivers not as it passes from the warmth of the dying room to the region of ice and snow on the outside. It has its convoy of blessed spirits, and, with the expiration of the last breath, it has passed from the operation of earth's laws to the warm, full, abiding glory of the celestial home. Like the light which is invisible, and the heat which is unfelt, until they strike the answering medium of the earth's atmosphere, the spirit of the departed may be invisible for a moment, but it shall assume, immediately it enters the glory of the celestial—the atmosphere of its heavenly home—distinctness of shape in the body God has prepared for it; angelic sweetness of beauty, and warmth of love, as loved friends press around it; and ardency of devotion as it feels itself in the presence of the Father of all spirits, and of the Saviour whom on earth it had trusted and loved.

The line of thought we now have been pursuing, reminds us also of the vast resources at God's command in con-

nection with the future of human souls. Truly, in our Father's house there are many mansions, and I wonder myself at the trouble some Christian teachers take to separate by an exact line of demarcation, what they call the intermediate state of the blessed, from their final glory. Rather do I gladly hope that the difference is one of degree only, and that as the ages go by, the glory of the one, is ever brightening into the glory of the other. That, too, is a blind view of the realities of creation, which does not see that there may be, at God's command, punitive regions of icy cold, of burning heat, of pain, and of death. Our subject also may teach us that with all these vast resources at His command, God is not fettered by, or confined to, the particular mode of distributing rewards and punishments to which we would too often tie His hands, but that He will be able to use that discrimination and judgment in the disposal of human souls in the future, which is ascribed to him in the Scripture, and which the perfection of His nature demands. I think, too, that we shall have seen that there is no need to call in to our help any thought of the sleep of the soul until the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. God has already a home and a suitable clothing for the soul, which longs not for the sleep of the grave, but to be clothed upon with its house which is from heaven. God is not so poverty stricken as to need that the souls of His children should lie by until the only body He can find them are washed, renewed, and fitted once more to be the habitation of the spirit. The very word, glory, conveys to our minds an idea of lavish fullness, like that we see even now on all sides of us. And once more ;

how near may we not feel to our dear friends who have been parted from us. The light we see scintillating in the stars may be encircling their heavenly forms. They are with God, and they are not far from us. We may have true sympathy with them in all pure and holy service. We may feel that pure spirits, who have looked upon them in their glory, and who perhaps have heard them speak of us in the story of their earthly life, are often round about us. Be it ours to pass from the carnal to the spiritual here, that at last we may pass from the earthly to the heavenly. Let us live as in the sight of the unseen, that as we have been partakers of the terrestrial, we, too, may with them also be partakers of the celestial, glory.

SERMON XII.

THE HEAVENLY SONG.

“ And they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne.”

REVELATION, xiv., 3.

I NEED hardly say that this Book of the Revelation is a dark and mysterious book, and hence one of great difficulty to understand aright. We stand, for the most part, in silent awe before the dark symbols it contains of the world's sin, of its present throes, and of its future struggles. It is a dark sky indeed, black with heavy, hanging clouds, in the midst of which lightnings play and thunders roll, like the storms we have seen in the midst of our Welsh mountains. There are intervals, however, when the clouds break, and through a rift here and there we discern the bright blue of the sky beyond. We descry afar off the glorious issue of all the judgments and the woes. Nay, more : we discern beyond the confines of this earth the abode of the saints. We gain an insight into the lives, the employments, and the surroundings of those whose spirits have passed away from our midst, and who have been called from among the children of men to walk with Christ in white, in His glory, because they are worthy. Such a glimpse is given to us in my text : and elsewhere

in this book, as you know, such glimpses abound. Of course these visions of the heavenly glory are figurative and emblematical, but you will have observed how they all harmonize with our best tastes, and agree with our happiest feelings. It would not surprise any of us who are at all aware of the boundless wealth of God in creation, if somewhere in our travels through space we were to light upon a city fulfilling the description we have here of the Heavenly Jerusalem, whose gates are pearls, and whose foundations are garnished with precious stones. Nor does it at all surprise us to read in the text, that the jubilant joy of Heaven takes the form of song. It is what we should expect. And see, my hearers, how all these descriptions connect the heavenly life with this. Heaven is, throughout the whole of this book, and, indeed, throughout the whole of Scripture, described in *character* as the upward continuation and development of all that is pure and good on earth; and in *condition* as the upward continuation and development of all that makes life truly happy now.

Song is the expression of the fullness of life. The whole of creation is not vocal. It cannot utter its life in song. The music of the spheres is silence. The brute creation, as we call it, is for the most part a mute creation also. But to some members of it it is, however, given to be the unconscious choristers of the vast assemblage. It is in the fullness of their life that their notes are most full and sweet. To man, however, it is reserved to put this undefined song of all creation into words which express feelings and thoughts, and to portray the various

emotions of the soul in fitly modulated sounds. Song is the expression of joy. There are, indeed, musical sounds, plaintively sweet, in which the soul may sometimes express its sadness, but these can hardly be called song. It was the heaviness of the hearts of the Jewish captives which led them, as they sat down weeping by the rivers of Babylon, to ask—"How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Nor less is it given to man to press the inanimate creation into his service: to make its fragile reeds, its cords and metals, vocal with the song of his own joy, or with the wail of his own sorrow. "Awake, psaltery and harp," says the Psalmist, "I myself will awake right early." We need not wonder, therefore, that with this capacity for music, and with a keen susceptibility to its power, the literature of most nations should abound with songs expressive of the social affections, and in national songs, the words and music of which will stir a man's heart in lonely solitudes and on crowded battle-fields. It would therefore be very surprising if, when we ascended into the higher regions of the Christian life, we met with an absence of song. We are prepared to find that, in proportion to the vigour of the Church's life, to the fulness of her love, to the glow of her enthusiasm, and to the strength of her zeal, has been the fullness and comprehensiveness of her song: and we are also prepared to find that, when the Church is no longer suffering and struggling, no longer a Church militant, but a Church triumphant, the music of its song should fall upon the ears of the entranced Apostle as the "voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder," as the music of a new song sung before the throne.

I.—Let us enquire into the character of those who sing the Heavenly Song. And first, they are the *redeemed*, the delivered from among men. They once were in worse than Egyptian bondage, in bondage to their sins, slaves alike of their brute passions and of their intellectual pride, the willing servants of the devil. But they heard a voice that convinced; they felt a love which kindled their own, and which gave them a new power for good; they felt a touch which healed them; through fear and trembling, it may be, they rose up and departed; following their leader they crossed the sea which divided them from the house of their bondage, and there they lifted up their voice in thanksgiving. “He hath put a new song into my mouth,” said the Psalmist, as he felt himself lifted up out of the miry clay; for if song is the expression of the fullness of life, if it is still more the expression of joy, louder and sweeter does it become when it ascends as a song of deliverance, like that which burst from the Israelitish host as it stood on the safe further shore of the Red Sea. But the singers in heaven are those who have been delivered from all the perils of the wilderness. They have gained the heaven of their love; for them sin, want, danger, sickness and death, are among the former things which have passed away. They are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and therefore are they without fault before the throne. Secondly, they who sing are the pure, not defiled. I do not think these words at all favour the Romish or Ritualistic idea of the merits of celibacy. Such an idea, if pushed to its legitimate conclusion, makes God inconsistent with Himself, and makes complete human

nature a mistake. But I take it as a figurative way of expressing the purity of those who have attained to a place in the heavenly choir. It is in harmony with another expression in this same book, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Their robes are washed white; the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And may we not also take the words as indicative of that absence of bodily appetites and passions which, if admitted into heaven, would agitate and mar the finer pleasures of the soul and of the mind. As the Lord Himself has said, "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." Thirdly, they who sing are the followers of the Lamb. The hundred and forty and four thousand are with the Lamb; they follow Him whithersoever He goeth. The Lamb is in the midst of the resplendent glory, the symbol of the meekness and condescension of the Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, as well as of the meekness which is the crowning excellence of all true human greatness. As the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne, He is in heaven the fulfilment of the pledge, of the oft-repeated assurance, of the Spirit of God, that "The meek shall inherit the earth," that their inheritance shall be for ever. As a Lamb slain He is the sympathetic point of contact between the fulness and abidingness of the health and strength of God, and the weakness, pain, and death of God's children here. As the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, He is to the redeemed the abiding manifestation of the loving forethought and unchanging love of God to them. As the Lamb who has redeemed them by

His blood, by His life given for them, He is felt by them to be worthy of their most lavish and precious love, to which they give utterance as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Constrained by this grateful love they had followed Him on earth along ways which led to scorn and poverty, to bonds, imprisonment, and death, and now safely gathered into the heavenly fold they follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

Perhaps the thought has crossed your minds before now, my hearers, that in the midst of all the praise lavished upon the Son, the Father Himself is forgotten, or holds but a secondary place. But your fear, lest this should be so, has vanished, when you have remembered how they are One in essence. How the very purpose for which the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men, was to reveal a glory as of the only begotten of the Father, was to reconcile men to God, and so swell the Kingdom of God. How, in His separate form as the Son of Man, all His desires, all His works, all His hopes were identical with those of His Father. It was the will of the Father which He came to do. It was the Kingdom of God of which He spoke. It was in His Father's house that the many mansions were. Did human souls cling to Him in their weakness and sin? He offers them all to the Father; "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." Their interests were the same. His Apostle speaks of a time when, His separate work completed, He shall deliver up the Kingdom—all the myriads of human souls who have attained pardon, righteousness, and peace through Him—to God, even the Father, that He

may be all in all. This oneness of nature and interest is implied in all those descriptions of the heavenly praise which we have in words similar to those of the text. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne. The praise is to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb. The glory of God doth lighten the heavenly city, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Thus there is no rivalry of interest in heaven ; no separate objects of worship, jealous lest the share given to one may exceed that given to the others : although, alas ! too often on earth, men in their short-sightedness do sometimes speak of one portion of the eternal Godhead as if it were all. Fourthly, they who sing are the first fruits unto God and the Lamb. The first few sheaves gathered in from the harvest fields of earth. Yet even they, the first fruits, are a multitude which no man can number. If such be the number of the first fruits, who shall reckon up the fulness of the harvest ? The idea is one and of a piece with what we are taught elsewhere in the Scriptures, of the boundlessness of the love of God, and the fulness and freeness of the mercy offered through Jesus Christ. It is that of the God who means what He says, when He declares that " He desires not the death of the sinner." It is the unlimited love which cries, " Still there is room," which seeks the lost, and which is at last, before the large and full heart of the Saviour " shall see of its travail and be satisfied," " to reconcile all things to itself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." And fifthly, they who sing are before the throne ; they stand at the source of the world's light, and bliss, and being. As the pure in heart

they see God. They see His face. How can this be? God is a spirit, He is everywhere present. You cannot put a pin's point anywhere where he is not. But if this were all of God, it would be of little comfort to us. Our souls yearn for something more than a law, a pervading principle, or even an universal spirit. Our heart and our flesh cry out for the living God. God, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, meets this longing of our nature. There is a place where His eyes look love, where His ears bend to the cry of human souls; where, as a Divine Father, gathering into Himself all fatherly strength, love, righteousness and wisdom, He takes to Himself a shape and form, in which all these qualities of His nature may be seen and shown. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Spirit to become *manifest in time*; of the Omnipresent God to become *visible in space*. There, where He reveals His glory, do the happy spirits of whom the text speaks, feel that they have reached the fulness of their life, as they behold His glory, and look into His face.

II. We may now proceed to inquire into the character of the Heavenly Song. It is, as it were, a New Song—new and yet not new. The burden of it was old, for, as we have seen, redemption was the theme; but it was new in that it was a Song of redemption complete. Very likely some of the singers had aforetime been amongst those to whom St. Paul had written, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” It was not complete then, but it was drawing towards completion. Now it was complete. Before, amidst all their confident anticipations of the completion of the good work which had been begun in them, it

was needful for them to receive the caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Now all the perils of the journey were over, fightings without and fears within belonged to the past; the last enemy had been fought and vanquished. From weakness they had risen to strength; from the throes and agonies of death to exuberant fulness of life; from intermittent conflicts with sin to a state of perpetual holiness and perfect peace. We need not wonder, therefore, as the consciousness of all this dawns upon them, that with new vigour they should sing of the old redemption now complete for them.

Then, perhaps, while the Song was new in the perfection of the music to which it was set, and the richness of the voices of those who sung, the very music itself might only be the heavenly rendering of earthly strains, and amidst the voices of the singers you might have discovered a touch of the plaintiveness of earth. I am told that in the new Sunday School Music, which has lately come to us from America, there are many clusters of notes which remind a Lancashire man of the popular music of his native county. Years back, perhaps, these were borne across the sea in the hearts and on the lips of emigrants, and having solaced the latter for a while amidst the loneliness of their new life, they have taken a fresh form, and have come back to us to gladden the hearts of our children to-day. I do not take it upon me to say how vivid or how indistinct may be the remembrance which a soul entering Heaven may retain of its earthly life; but I cannot think that it enters Heaven empty handed—shorn and bereft of all those gifts of the intellect and graces of the heart which found their highest

glory in the service of God here. I love rather to think how age after age the "glory and honour of the nations" are being gathered into that other world; to swell the fulness of its life, and to increase the variety of its employments. How gifted fingers may strike from Heavenly instruments the music which on earth they loved so well. How voices of richest tone and fullest compass may weave new variations into the music of the old Song. Thus, while the music is ever new in the perfection of its expression, and in the faultlessness of its rendering, it is old and familiar in many of its parts in the happy—even if it be indistinct—recollection of the singers. I dare say you have known before now a man whose early years were clouded by poverty and sorrow, but who has since prospered in the world, and you have noticed how the remembrance of those early trials has given to him a subdued air, has softened and chastened what would otherwise have been his exultant joy. So I have sometimes thought will the jubilancy of even Heaven's music be subdued by the remembrance of former struggles, and failures, and sins; for I read how the mention of sins which have been washed away by a Saviour's blood, forms at least one touching beautiful line of the Heavenly Song.

The Song would be new in its comprehensiveness. It would be the Song of those who have realized to the full the extent of the deliverance which had been wrought for them; who felt as they had never felt before—how unworthy they had been of the love which had been lavished upon them; whose eyes no longer looked as through a glass darkly, but saw in increasing clearness the unveiling

of the mysteries of God, the unfolding of His purposes concerning them, and who beheld around them on every side the glory to which they had been raised. For, my hearers, not until we get to Heaven shall we see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Then only shall we know how much we are indebted to the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Well may we make the words our own—

When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own ;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart ;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

Then, as we think of the Song as it is sung to-day, and as it will be repeated in the years to come, we may regard it as new in the oneness and number of the singers. On earth, even when not separated from each other by dividing seas, these are kept from each other by social barriers, by doctrinal barriers, by priestly barriers. Standing aloof they know not how warm and strong a pulse beats in each towards the one object of their love. But there the barriers are broken down, the cold suspicion removed. "With the voice together shall they sing when the Lord shall bring again Zion." And then how overwhelming the number of the choir. It was a beautiful sight to see very lately four thousand children of London gathered under the dome of St. Paul's, to sing their children's hymns, and to listen to words of wisdom. It was a grand occasion when, not long ago, all the chief singers and musicians of Germany

gathered within the solemnly beautiful Cathedral of Cologne, to rehearse before admiring listeners the music of Germany's most gifted sons. But what are these gatherings, whose music faints and dies almost within those sacred walls, in comparison with that multitude which no man can number, the music of whose chorus of redemption swells and spreads over all the Heavenly plains, and is sometimes even heard by eager listeners, like St. John, within the confines of earth ?

In its surroundings, too, is the Song new. It has risen before now from the midst of the imperfections of earth ; in the intervals of fierce persecution ; from cottage homes ; from underneath bare rafters ; from the lonely glen ; from the bleak mountain side ; from the margin of the sea, whose murmuring was its refrain ; from amidst the struggles of poverty, and from between paroxysms of pain. But now the tide of sin and persecution, and sickness and poverty has turned for ever. They are rich in heaven's wealth. The redeemed body knows no pain. Sin is shut out for ever. They stand around the margin of the crystal sea. The gates of pearl, and walls of transparent gems bound them on every side. They congregate around refreshing fountains. They stand with strength ever renewed before the throne of God and of the Lamb. All the surroundings, the conditions, and the employments of the heavenly life, conspire to develop to the utmost those feelings of grateful love, which find their most elevated expression in the new Song which no man could learn, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.

Let us take, in conclusion, these words of reservation

well into our consideration. Would we, my hearers, take a place in the heavenly choir, we must learn the words, and catch their spirit. We must learn the notes, and rehearse the music, in this our earthly life ; which may thus be to us, if we will, the lower stage of a life higher and eternal ; otherwise we shall be, by nature and training, altogether unfitted for such a heavenly life and companionship.

SERMON XIII.

THE HEAVENLY SILENCE.

“ There was silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour.”

REV. viii., 1.

A GREAT many interpretations have been given of the words of the text. By some it has been considered emblematic of pauses which have occurred in the fierce persecutions of the Church by the world. By others it is taken as typical of the peace of the millenium. Again, it is the solemn pause which occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem. And, yet once more, it has been taken as the silence of awe among the heavenly inhabitants who, startled by the judgments which had preceded it, look forward expectantly, with the solemn silence of suspense and of intense earnestness, to the dread events which are to follow. I am not prepared myself to say which of these interpretations is right, or whether any one of them is the true one. It may be that the time is not yet ripe for the full unfolding of the meaning of the seals, the trumpets, and the judgments. My purpose to-night is to take the text as illustrative of a phase in the life of Heaven which is not often noticed. We hear of its jubilant song, rising loud and high,

like the voice of many waters, as the great multitude, which no man can number, gathered out of every clime, gratefully celebrate the redeeming love of God through Jesus Christ. We hear of its perpetual worship and constant high service, until, I fear, meek, timorous, and meditative souls are overawed by the grandeur of the thought and of the scene, and wonder, after all, whether they will be gainers in joy and full happiness by their translation to the heavenly life. It may give some comfort to such—indeed, it may endear the thought of heaven more to us all—if to-night we think for awhile of an aspect of the Heavenly life of which we do not hear much—its silent pauses, and its quiet resting hours. Silence. Silence in Heaven. Silence needed even in Heaven for the perfect enjoyment of life there. These are to form the subjects of our thoughts now.

I. Silence. The importance of silence in the economy of creation will be apparent, if we think how silently all the subtle and powerful forces of nature do their work. Silently do the planets move with inconceivable swiftness around the sun; while sun and planets, and systems of suns and planets, with their attendant satellites, move with swift precision on their march through the vastness of space, with comets circling in the midst of their path, and all with less noise than the faintest buzz of the tiniest insect's wing. Silently the light comes streaming to us through the dark abyss of space, until it is kindled into brightness by the atmosphere of our earth. Silently do those magnetic currents, which have played so important a part in the past history of the earth, pass to and fro from

pole to pole. Silently, for the most part, does the mysterious electric fluid permeate nearly all substances, and light up those brilliant appearances in the sky on which we have lately looked ; and though now and then, by the rolling reverberations of the thunder, and the roaring of the wind, the silence is broken in which air and electricity do their work, still the silent pauses are longer than the outspoken language. Silently, and with unhurried steps, do seeds germinate and grow ; do trees gather girth, and put on fresh foliage, from year to year. Even the apparently ceaseless roaring and murmuring of the sea have their silent pauses, in which the tumultuous tossing of the waves subsides into a calm, and we can scarcely hear the splash of the tiny ripples as they die along the shelving shore. Though here and there, from crowded towns and busy hamlets, the noise of work, the buzz of voices, the clamour of many lives may be heard, yet are these but as pins' points in the vastness of the surrounding space, in which is felt

The silence that is in the starry sky ;
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

There are silent pauses, too, in human life. The silence with which we await the issue of some important event. The silence of a court of justice, when the verdict or judgment is about to be given. The expectant silence of our homes, as we await the birth of a new life into the world. The sadder and more solemn silence with which we watch the departure of the souls of dear friends from the wasted and uninhabitable body. And nightly there comes to us

all the welcome silence of sleep, without which we should become melancholy or mad ; and life itself, even if it could be continued, would become an insupportable burden.

Then there is need for silent pauses even in our waking life ;—for reflection, when we commune with our own hearts and make diligent search ; for rest, when we may recover our breath, and look back upon the way we have come ; and for the gathering up of fresh strength for the accomplishment of the work remaining to be done, and for the bearing of the sufferings yet to be borne. How much more true is this of the Christian life, if we would have depth as well as breadth, power to endure as well as quickness of growth ? As the river rushes over its stony ford, you can hear the noise made by its shallow waters from afar ; but unheard, and scarcely seen, are those quiet pools where, under overhanging boughs of oak, and hazel, and willow, the water gathers depth and transparency, and teems with life it is there able to sustain.

Our Lord knew and felt all this when, though surrounded by a crowd of men and women who had souls to be saved, and who were in sore need of instruction, He yet said to His followers—“Come ye yourselves into a desert place apart and rest awhile.” He knew that if His servants were to succeed in the great work that lay before them, they had need of quiet hours in which they might gather up strength for the days to come.

The world needs silence. One is tempted sometimes to re-echo the exclamation attributed to Dr. Johnson, “O for silence for a generation !” Perhaps this would be too long a pause in the world’s spoken life, yet how much vain

babbling would the world be spared. When a man goes on talking for a long time he is apt to say something foolish. When a man too goes on writing book after book his thoughts become weaker and weaker. The world does need silence, but this can only be attained by the self-imposed silence of those who are prone to talk and given to self-assertion. Let us, my hearers, imitate our Lord, not only in His speech, but in His silence. As when in the synagogue of His own city, Nazareth, He shut the book, and gave it to the minister, and while the eyes of all were fixed upon Him he taught them by silence as well as by speech. Better prepared shall we be for the time to speak if we have faithfully regarded the time to keep silence.

II. Silence in Heaven. We are familiar with descriptions of the outspoken joy and gladness of Heaven; of the harpers harping with their harps; of music swelling loud, like the voice of thunder and the roar of many waters; of the Song of the Redeemed set to the Heavenly music, into which, we doubt not, there is gathered many a stave and bar well loved on the earth; of the grand chorus of which redemption, in some of its many forms, is ever the theme; of

The shout of them that triumph,
The song of them that feast.

But in the spirit of the words of the text there comes a time when the thunderings are over, when the roar of the waters cease, when the music gently tones down from its victorious shouts through grateful affectionate strains to faintest whisperings of thankful love. These too cease at last, and give place to the silence which falls and spreads

over the Heavenly plains. Does the service and worship of Heaven cease with its expressed songs? I think not. It but takes another form—that of gentle utterances and of silent thanksgiving, of emotions for the time too deep and tender for utterance. The same thought is beautifully expressed by Addison, concerning the mute creation, in the lines

What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball ;
What though no real voice nor sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found ;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice ;
For ever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is Divine.

Silence will be needed in Heaven for the sake of variety. To you, my hearers, who listen daily to a thousand notes of birds ; whose eyes look upon the exquisite and diversified colours of the flowers which blossom around your homes ; who note the ever changing forms of the clouds which gather and flit across the sky ; who look on the one hand to the bold outline of those grand old hills, and on the other over this rich and widely extended plain, I need scarcely say how much of the charm of the earth and of the life we live upon it is due to the almost infinite variety with which God has graciously diversified them. We can readily conceive, therefore, how, unless our natures undergo a radical change, the sameness of employment even in Heaven would sicken and pall upon our souls. I have read somewhere the saying of a minister that he would like

to look for a thousand years at the mark of the nail in one hand of his Saviour, and for another thousand years at the mark of the nail in the other hand. No doubt he made it in the excess of his devotion to his Saviour. But it is evident to me that he possessed but an imperfect notion of the demands of his own nature, and a low conception of the kind of homage due to his Lord. Even if our natures on their translation to Heaven were so altered as to be made capable of bearing, without weariness, sameness of employment, it is clear that such oneness of occupation—the excessive exercise of our musical powers, for instance—would do injustice to other parts of our nature, would check its spirit of inquiry, would shut up sources of knowledge, and would do dishonour to God our Father by leading us to honour one part of His nature and of His works while we trample with neglect on the others.

Silence, then, will be needed in Heaven, for rest and for meditation. Perhaps there is not a more endearing aspect in which heaven appears to souls weary of the sin, the sorrow, and the strife of earth, than that of an eternal Sabbath. A rest remaining to the people of God. We can readily conceive how welcome rest would be to a soul fresh from lingering suffering, from sharp pangs of pain, from the weariness of long illness, in which, during the solemn night watches it had said, O, when shall it be morning, and even the day, with its glad sunlight, could hardly be borne. How a soul new from fierce conflict of doubt, from the anguish of bitter parting would need rest and quiet before it felt equal to the dazzling brightness and jubilant joy of heaven. Nor is it

unreasonable to suppose, that again and again in the progress of the Heavenly life, when, as we turn aside from the more active service to quiet places apart, a general silence falls upon the Heavenly plain, there will come to us the same feeling of relief, and deepening of our joy, as that which even on earth we have felt, when from the brilliantly lighted assembly of fashion, of science, of music, of painting, and even of all combined, we have passed into the pale moonlight, or paler light of the stars, and have been thankful for the silence of nature, and for the quiet of our own dear homes.

The rest of Heaven is not idleness, is not emptiness of mind, but it is a rest into which meditation and thought enter, and for which the rest, the silence, give time and favourable opportunity. Very largely does meditation enter into the happiness of true religious life here. The psalmist would meditate upon God's works as well as talk of His doings, and many sensitive unassuming souls there are, to whom the quiet happiness of meditative thought is infinitely more precious than the rapturous joy which finds its expression in music. To these ever, and to all saints at times, will the silence of heaven be very welcome. It is in quiet hours that nature unlocks her treasures, and discovers her secrets to enquiring minds. It has been in the silence of home that the sweetest hymns which form our expression of devotion to-day have been conceived and finely wrought by quiet, saintly souls like him who wrote—

The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree ;
And seem by Thy sweet bounty made,
For those who worship Thee.

And we can well imagine, how the sweetest visions of the Divine love, how the sublimest conceptions of the Divine Power, and the fullest effusions of the Divine wisdom, will come to our glorified spirits, not so much in their communicative moods, in their hours of praise and thanksgiving, as in their receptive moods, in those quiet moments of holy thought and converse, when the mind will be most fitted to form conceptions, and to receive communications of heavenly knowledge and truth.

Silence will be needed in Heaven for converse. For converse with God our Father Himself; for surely it is not presumptuous in me to suppose that there may come a time in my history, when I, a single atom of matter, a tiny spark of the Divine intelligence, shall at last have reached the very centre and source of my being, and of all being, shall feel myself happy within the close embrace of the loving arms, whose furthest reach is to the very ends of creation, and looking with undimmed and undazzled eye on the light from which all other light has sprung, and of which, on earth, cloud and fire, and Shekinah flame, were but faintest tokens, I may in the fulness of my bliss, in the perfection of my being, say, "Lo, I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." For converse with the Divine Saviour, for Whom we have worked, in Whom we have trusted, and Whom, having not seen we have loved. How much is there that we should like to say to Him! and is it not possible, He may have something to say to us? That now and again in the midst of quiet pauses, he may call us aside in words similar to His words on earth—

Come ye yourselves apart,
And listen too,
For I have many things
To say to you :
I want to let you know
What I have thought
Of all this work for me
That you have wrought.

For converse too with Holy Angels. I for one should like to hear from them some of the wonders of creation, of the origin and progress of life, and other mysteries of the far past, which these sons of the morning, who sang for joy when this earth of ours first appeared to them bathed in its first flood of light, must have to tell. Nor less for converse with the Saints of olden time, to hear from them the story of their own struggling faith, of their first bursting love, of the immediate cause of their doubts and failures, and to tell them on our part how much we owe to the words which record their own experience, how in our highest joy and deepest sorrow, and in all the moods between, we have found no fitter words in which to describe the emotions of our own hearts than the words they themselves had spoken so long ago. And perhaps from those of us who have come fresh from the struggles of life would they like to know something which we could tell them of the human life of to-day.

And is there no one else with whom we should like to spend half an hour of silence in Heaven? Ah, yes! Our souls instinctively think of some who once were very dear to us while they were continued to us here. We long for a renewal of their friendship. We feel it would ill accord

with the perfection of the arrangement we everywhere see around us, if, supposing a life after this, there should be a complete obliteration of or indifference to the past friendships which, while memory holds her seat, are so precious a part of our lives now. "We shall know them when we meet," and we shall have much to talk about with them, of the way we have come and the life we have lived since they left us. And how much more will they have to tell us of their life there. We can even think how there may be happiness felt by us all which shall be too deep even for words to utter; just as there are in our earthly lives—and indeed our earthly lives would lose much of their worth were it not so—times when in the society of those whom we love we feel a satisfaction, a fulness of joy, which is far beyond the power of words to express, as we feel happy, safe, and satisfied in each other's love. Besides the general pauses and silence of Heaven there may be local and individual pauses. Some of you, I doubt not, would like, as I should like, to stand aside from the jubilant throng; to hear the Heavenly music from a distance, sometimes without being engaged in it; to listen to the deep bass of many voices; to hear the tremulous accents of little children; to distinguish the clear, sweet treble of youthful saints, all whose voices may bear even in Heaven some resemblance to what we knew of them on earth, as they all join in sweetest unison in the song which is, as it were, new.

Perhaps to-night we have been half unconsciously depicting some of the future scenes of our own life's history. I do not know whether you have ever felt the same, but a feeling comes over me at times, when I encounter new

scenes and circumstances in life, that I have seen this before—I have passed through this before. The feeling is difficult to account for. It may be that in our waking or sleeping dreams we have previously imagined such scenes or such combinations of circumstances. But what we have been speaking of to-night may become a reality to us. The time may come, if we will, when gathered together in some quiet nook in Heaven we shall rest awhile from its glorious activities; we shall hear the Heavenly music as from a distance it is borne to us across the River of the Water of Life; and in the deep gratitude of our hearts for this rest of satisfaction and fulness of joy we shall say one to the other—This is just like what we were thinking and speaking of that Sunday evening long ago. May God grant it. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

THE FOUNDATIONS GARNISHED WITH PRECIOUS STONES.

“And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth an emerald, the fifth sardonyx; the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth a topaz, the tenth a chrysoprasus, the eleventh a jacinth, the twelfth an amethyst.”

REV. xxi., 19, 20.

It may be that to some of you this passage sounds like a dry list of hard names, which somewhat mars the otherwise exquisite beauty of the chapter in which it is placed. To others, perhaps, like huge bosses of rock, which, though bare and difficult of access, yet give a charm of their own by way of contrast to the softer outlines of the landscape, these words possess a beauty peculiar to themselves in the midst of the Apocalyptic vision of the glories of the New Jerusalem. Since the Spirit of God thought it not vain for them to be written, we may be sure that there are ideas which they are intended to convey to thoughtful minds concerning the nature of the heavenly state—ideas most numerous, and most precious, in proportion to the earnestness and devoutness of the thought with which we regard

them. In this spirit let me ask your attention while I unfold to you what, to me, appear to be the teachings this passage presents, concerning the nature of the heavenly state, in its twofold aspect—I., as a place of residence ; and, II., as a condition of existence.

The names in the text are those of precious stones, and the thoughts which, in my mind, have gathered around them relate—

1. To the perfection of their form.
2. To the distinctiveness and harmony of their colour.
3. To the greatness of their value.
4. To the indestructibility of their nature : and then, when speaking of heaven as a condition of existence, I may have a word to say concerning—
5. The manner of their origin.

Now, I., let us notice how these words affect our ideas of Heaven as a place of residence.

First. In the perfection of their form. All our conceptions of form are derived by us from the outer world. The shape of the sun, the directness of its rays, the forms of trees, the shapes assumed by their leaves and flowers, the arch of the rainbow, the motions of the heavenly bodies, together with the whole of the objects surrounding man, have given to him his conception of form. Nowhere, perhaps, in the whole range of nature, are we so impressed with the perfection and interdependence of form, as in the shapes of minerals. It may be known to some of you that all substances in nature, capable of crystallization, crystallize in certain forms. Iron in one form ; water, as you may see in snow and in the frost on your window pane, in another ;

gold, quartz, felspar, and other substances, in other forms of their own. Now it is one of the properties of the substances of which the precious stones mentioned in the text are formed to assume some of the most beautiful and exact forms in nature—in manifold varieties and shades of combination. May not the great idea to be derived from this property of precious stones, be the perfection of form and order, and the symmetry of beauty, which shall prevail in the outer conditions of the heavenly existence? Wonderful is the order pervading all things in this present world. Yet we can conceive how, running through it all, there is taken into account the fact of man's sinfulness: for are there not earthquakes, tempests, droughts, and pestilences? Teeming myriads of life are here: yet is not the impression forced upon us that some of these were made rather for our punishment than for our enjoyment? But in the new heavens and the new earth we can imagine how, while revelling in the light of God, and basking in the warmth of genial sunshine, "the sun shall not light upon us nor any heat:" how, while there shall be the river of life and the fountains whither the Lamb shall lead His ransomed flock, there shall not be the tornado or tempest, or stormy wind, or rushing torrent, to hurt or to destroy. Or how, while in the final condition of things there shall survive, or be developed out of the old, forms of life for man's companionship and delight, there shall not be heard the hissing of the serpent, or growl of ferocious beast, nor shall one race of creatures need to die for the sustenance of others. The order will be perfect. The configuration of land and water, what of inhabitants they may contain,

the relation of one world to another, and of all to the perfected nature of the human race, regenerated in the likeness of God ; will be perfect and symmetrical in all beauty, like the shapes of natural precious stones.

Secondly. Let us next notice the distinctiveness, yet harmonious blending of the colours of precious stones. There is jasper, with its ribbon-like bands, red, green, yellow, and white. Sapphire, of intensest blue, shading through green and red to brown. Chalcedony, white, blue, gray, and green. Emerald, of a rich bright green. Sardonyx (as known among the ancients), red, shading off to white. Sardius (agate), with its commingling of yellow and red. Chrysolite, of finest green. Beryl, of a darker shade. Topaz, ranging from a colourless transparency to yellow, red, blue, and green. Chrysoprase, in all its shades of green. Jacinth (sometimes sold for diamonds), red, brown, gray, and green. And Amethyst, of violet blue. Such are the colours of the precious stones, and our text represents them as all entering into the building of the wall of the city, garnishing even the foundations thereof.

Now, if the perfection of form figures to us the completeness and perfection of the heavenly arrangements for the safety and well being of its inhabitants, may we not regard this harmony of colour as denoting how all outward sights shall minister to the gratification of the taste, and excite the most pleasurable emotions of the soul? Nor must we forget the transparency of the gems, and how, while layer after layer they are built up into heavenly walls, the light of God falls on each, and all blend their

colour in sweetest unison, transparently, too, so that great and high as the city wall is, it casts no shadow along its course. With what a profusion of colours has God adorned this earth! He who formed the eye shall He not see? His perfect conception of the beautiful has arranged all these for the happiness of his creatures, and in a higher and completer form will He arrange the colouring of the heavenly home.

The transit is easy from harmony of colour to harmony of sound, and we may surely conclude that in like manner as all that is beautiful in colour will be arranged for the eye, all the notes of music will be so arranged as to produce perfect harmony for the ear, and that with respect to feeling, the play of the emotions in the interchange of friendship, shall not only be free from whatever would wound the most delicate sensibility, but shall abound with all the materials for bliss most perfect.

Thirdly, I pass on to notice the greatness of their value. Precious stones represented very largely, in ancient times, the wealth of the rich; always marketable, they, from the smallness of their size, formed a convenient substitute for hoarded money. They were marks of wealth and luxury, and in their smaller forms were used as now, as ornaments, and for the decoration of the person. They were also worn as mementos and keepsakes, having the names of dear friends engraven on them. Hence it is that in the ceremonial and figurative religion of the Jews, we find them pressed into the service of the Lord. Thus on the breast-plate of the high priest were set four rows of precious stones,—

Sardius,	Topaz,	Carbuncle,
Emerald,	Sapphire,	Diamond,
Ligure,	Agate,	Amethyst,
Beryl,	Onyx,	Jasper.

And when in after times a temple was to be built for the worship of God in Jerusalem, we find that King David had gathered together the most precious substances in nature for its adorning ; among which were, “ Onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and stones of divers colours, and marble stones in abundance.” And when Isaiah, in prophetic vision, described the mercy and glory of the latter day, he told the church, long suffering and waiting, that God “ would lay her stones with fair colours, and lay her foundations with sapphires, her windows of agates, and all her borders of pleasant stones.” Thus, in olden time, by type and prophecy conjointly, was the final glory portrayed, and the last vision of John assumes the same shape, as in Patmos he sees the New Jerusalem arrayed in all the glory of colour, and built in all the perfection of form, and adorned with all the wealth pertaining to precious stones.

Shall we take the preciousness of these stones as an illustration of the wealth of Him who has all the resources of creation at His command ? How vast is the idea of that wealth conveyed to us by the text ! Here are stones, one of which would make its possessor wealthy, built into a wall fifteen hundred miles square. Or we may take this extraordinary wealth as indicative of the fact, that all else in that heavenly world will be in keeping with its walls and gates ; that we are not to regard Heaven as a house grand

on the outside but bare and desolate within, or like a home where slowly industry and frugality displace the tokens of former poverty, but as a home where all is in keeping,—the city walls and gates, the streets, the river, the inhabitants in their glory, their music, their rest, their companionship, their worship, and all that pertains to the heavenly life, shall betoken the unlimited resources of the Divine Father, who, as, with grains of sand, can build the city walls with gems, and pave the city streets with gold.

Fourthly. Let us now consider awhile, the imperishable nature of precious stones. Mineral substances are sometimes classified according to their hardness, and this hardness is denoted by means of figures, ranging from one to ten. Now, the precious stones are of the highest degree of hardness, they will scratch metals and other stones, as you know the diamond will scratch glass, but these other substances will scarcely scratch them; nor will they yield for the most part to the destructive power of acids. Of all earthly substances they are the most enduring—fit emblems, my hearers, as far as the earthly may set forth the heavenly, of the imperishable and unfading nature of the heavenly glory. Time crumbles into ruins the proudest structures raised by the genius and skill of man. The sea washes away the land, and the rivers furrow deeply the mountains, but that glory based upon righteousness, which is promised in the covenant of the Eternal, shall be as enduring as Himself. Time shall not blunt the clear facings of its precious stones, nor fade their fair colours, nor sully the burnished gold of the heavenly pavement.

II. Thus far we have considered the imagery of the text

as illustrative of the outer glory of Heaven ; now let us look at it awhile as illustrative of its inner glory, as indicative of Heaven as a condition of existence. Here may we not see,—

First. In the perfection of form, an illustration of that perfection of individual life and character which we hope to realize in Heaven ? How far—as they would be first to confess, are the best natures here from that perfection ? Men are unequally or imperfectly developed ; there is strength without tenderness ; tenderness allied to weakness and inconstancy ; intellect dissevered from moral goodness ; but from our text we may infer that in heaven, like complete crystals, our individual characters will be developed into perfect symmetry and beauty. Not that we hope, even there, to find the qualities which are distributed over the whole race presented with equal force in the character of one individual, but,—

Secondly. As we have seen that the colours of the precious stones shade off into and blend with those of others—as indeed do also their forms—so we hope to see the distinctive features of each saintly character harmonize with all those surrounding it, the force of one nature toned down into tenderness on every side, and the amiability of another surrounded by saintly strength. Just as in nature we find in species central types from which numerous varieties diverge on every side, the whole forming a connected network of existence, and in precious stones we observe the marked forms and distinctive colours of one passing by gentle gradations and harmonious blending into those of others ; so, in the infinite varieties of taste, of loved pursuits, and

in the distinctive features of character, which in Heaven shall blend in harmonious shape and colouring, do we hope to find, as in an aggregation of human goodness, the most clear and living reflection of the perfect life and character of God.

This perfection of form and beauty of colouring implies powers of perception on the part of the inhabitants. Outer nature in this world is suited to the inner nature of man, but that nature, through sin and its consequent ignorance, has had its perception blunted, so that the sweetest music often falls unmelodiously on dull ears. Men look as with leaden eyes upon the most beautiful landscapes, and the finest conceptions of human genius are looked at listlessly by weary wanderers through galleries of art. There, we believe, the veil will be removed, the sensibilities of our nature set free and reach their finest tension, the eye made spiritual, the ear refined, the whole nature of each inhabitant made transparent as finest topaz, so that the outer glory of the kingdom shall find its response in the Divine glory of each redeemed soul.

Thirdly. We may look at the preciousness of the materials of which the Heavenly society is composed—even of human souls, the crown of all earthly creations—souls, too, doubly precious, if we think of them as redeemed from the bondage and curse of sin, not by silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and this sense of preciousness is still further increased if we think of the soul's capabilities, its capacity for the reception and classification of knowledge—how as in a microcosm it within itself assigns a place to all the objects of nature—of its capacity

for happiness, its power of imagination, and especially if we remember that of all human souls ever made, the most gifted and saintly are gathered into the New Jerusalem.

The saints build up its fabric ;
The corner stone is Christ.

“ They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it ;” the meaning of which I take to be that all the pure and noble thoughts, all the fine and lofty imaginings, the divinest poetry and music, the holiest memories which have been slowly gathering throughout the long ages, find at last their place in Heaven ; that there the human minds which God has most divinely gifted find their place also, freed from all that marred and blemished them on earth ; and, as if to tone down this excess of brightness, lowly saints,

Who little deem
Their daily strife an angel's theme,

are gathered from the lowliness, and trials, and frequent poverty of their earthly lot to the places prepared for them in the Heavenly home.

Thus does all the pure light and Christian warmth which from God has streamed into human hearts and lives, gladdening their earthly lot, find at last its way back to God ; to cluster as precious stones and lovely gems around the throne of God and the Lamb, while the most precious substances in nature shall contribute to the beautifying of the heavenly city.

Fourthly. Think for a moment of the indestructibility of this spiritual life and character, imperishable not only by reason of the bars and gates and safeguards by which evil shall be excluded from a place in the Divine economy, but also and even more so by virtue of the new life born within—the eternal life of God planted in the soul ; as St. Peter says, “ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.” A character which shall be continually developed along the line of its own growth, and shall be commensurate with the life of God.

Fifthly. Shall I say a last word on the origin of precious stones ? How, chemically, they have been formed by the most delicate mixing of substances ; how oftentimes molten as in fiery furnaces ; how sometimes built up by the percolation of water long continued, from which atom by atom was deposited upon the slowly forming crystal ; and how all this took place in darkness, in cavernous recesses of the earth ; and then, when want of space and the absence of other favourable conditions had prevented the forming of the perfect gem, the process of grinding and polishing had to be resorted to before the precious stone was fit for the adornment of human persons or handiwork.

You will see, I think, without my enlarging further, the strong resemblance there is between all these various processes, and that diversified Divine discipline by which God prepares His saints for Heaven. For them there is the fiery trial, through long years of patient waiting in obscurity and poverty, in contempt and persecution it may be, of

toil and disappointment and loss. Do you wonder at these trials, my brethren, as if some strange thing had happened to you? The mystery will be cleared up if you think of the glory that is to be revealed, and that this discipline is necessary even to the smallest part of it, if you would worthily occupy your appointed place in the Kingdom. "It is good for a man both to hope and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Wait living gems, wait human hearts,
Till Christ shall set you in His crown.

SERMON XV.

JERUSALEM AND ROME:

AN ECUMENICAL SERMON,

*Preached in Preeshenlle Chapel, Sunday Morning,
December 12, 1869.*

“Then the Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

ACTS xv., 16.

I. The scene is laid in the city of Jerusalem, and the time is twenty years after the death of the Saviour. The circumstances that had called the apostles and elders from their various missionary labours, had been the acceptance of Gentile converts into the Christian Church without their having undergone the rite of circumcision. The decision to be arrived at on this question was one of great importance to the infant Christian Church. It would determine for it whether it should remain a Jewish institution, bound up by local rites and ceremonies; or whether, without distinction of race or caste, it should be the religion for all men and for all time. It would also determine for the Church whether the secret of its power, the essence of its teaching, and the condition of its fellowship, were to depend upon the observance of an outward ritual, or to rest

abidingly upon the fellowship of human spirits with the God who is a Spirit, and who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; and the observance of the spiritualized morality taught by Jesus Christ ; the first made possible to man through the manifestation of God in the flesh, the second made practicable and comparatively easy through the all-constraining influence of love to Christ. In the raising of the question by certain of the sect of the Pharisees, we see, first, how Christianity absorbed into itself the purer elements of Judaism ; and, secondly, we discern how very early in its history Christianity was in danger of being modified for evil by the influence of that earlier and preparatory religion. Among the first speakers was that most hearty and generous of the Apostles, Peter, who, himself a Jew and early steeped in Jewish prejudices, had been delivered from his narrow and sectarian views by the effects of the marvellous vision he had seen at Joppa, and by the subsequent lives of the Gentile converts. Would that his words could for ever ring in the ears of those who, sheltering themselves under his name, practise their strange commingling of Jewish and Heathen ritual. "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear ?" Then Paul, an Apostle rising into fame, though as one born out of due time, declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by Barnabas and himself. And James, full of practical sagacity, recognizing in this call of the Gentiles the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, gave it as his opinion "that they should not trouble them which

from among the Gentiles are turned unto God." "But that we write to them," said he, "that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." And with this message of practical godliness, and this with caution against giving countenance to the impurities of heathenism, the messengers were sent to the Gentile Churches with the Apostolic greeting.

In this first council of the Church we do not find one Christian bishop assuming authority over the rest. No attempt is made to suppress differences of opinion. And so far from any effort being put forth to enforce uniformity of belief and practice, the very message of the council to the churches implies the right of the latter to a large exercise of individual judgment, in accordance with the general tenor of the Apostolic teaching. The spirit manifested at this early Church Council, and the result attained, are thus both in direct antagonism to that endeavour to unify the belief and practices of the Church; to place all the various widely-spread churches under one central Government at Rome; to sink the will of the laity in that of the bishops; and, by sacrificing the individuality of the Christian life, to exalt a non-natural Church life; which, manifesting itself in the early centuries of the Christian era, seeks to give new expression to itself to-day in Rome.

II. It will be well, however, for us to observe how, at this early date, the chief features of the Christian system had been formed, and its principal doctrines taught by its teachers, and accepted by its adherents. Within a few

weeks of the Lord's death, Peter had said to the Jews, "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob hath glorified His Son Jesus; Whom ye delivered up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let Him go. And killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. This is the stone which was set at nought by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." To the same effect in the following years spake Stephen and James and Paul. Thus, without encumbering themselves with theories of original sin, they accepted the fact of man's sinfulness and of his need of a Saviour, and preached Christ to men. Christ's redeeming work for men was thus no after-thought or growth of distant years; it was the truth with which Christianity started, based as it was upon the teaching of the Lord Himself. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost—is come to give His life a ransom for many." They believed in the mighty help of the Spirit of God, because they found themselves endowed with great power and wondrous gifts which had come to them in no ordinary way. They spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. They burdened themselves with no theories of creation, but believing in the words of James uttered at this council, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"—they doubted not that in His mighty and far-reaching plan, God had provided a place for those marvellous and, to men's short-sighted vision, supernatural and miraculous

works, whose reality and power they could not doubt, inasmuch as they were by turns themselves the observers, the agents, and the influenced by them. They saw that by means of these works, proof of the truth and Divine origin of the new religion was given to men before they were able to discover its internal excellence. And here in the city in which the event was said to have taken place, and in the presence of those who might and would deny it if they could—they preached unchallenged the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as a ground of man's hope for the future. Whatever other motives or desires may have influenced them, whether it be a love of righteousness, a yearning charity, or a stern sense of duty, that led them to be good and do good, even to imprisonment, torture, and death, it is plain on their own shewing that the chief moral force by which they were impelled was the love of Christ, of which Paul writes, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." With this simple, sublime, and untrammelled faith, a faith finding a response in the deepest instincts of our humanity, the apostles departed once more from the city of Jerusalem to win the world for Christ. How they succeeded history shows.

III. And to-day, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, during which many church councils have met, there are assembled in the city of Rome eight hundred men—bishops—who claim to be the successors of the apostles and elders who met at Jerusalem, and they are met to give their sanction to matters pertaining to a church which lays claim to be the only true representative and lineal descendant of the Apostolic Church; which claims for its head as the

successor of Peter the power of the keys, which stoops not to parley with those it deems heretics, and which requires of doubting souls submission to its authority and acceptance of its dogmas, before it is willing to vindicate its claims to the one or to defend its teaching of the other.

On Wednesday last there marched in procession from the Vatican to St. Peter's in Rome, six Archbishop Princes, forty-nine Cardinals, eleven Patriarchs, six hundred and eighty Archbishops and Bishops, twenty-eight Abbots, and twenty-nine Generals of religious orders. Behind them was carried to the Cathedral the Pope himself, who there gave these his ministers who had travelled from every corner of the four quarters of the world to receive it, his fatherly benediction. Now, as we think of this imposing assemblage, one of the most imposing even Rome herself has beheld, we cannot but ask ourselves many questions. How far may these men be fairly deemed successors of the apostles? With what amount of justice and truth may their church claim, for itself alone, apostolic power? What resemblance or contrast is there between this Council in Rome of 1869 and the one held in Jerusalem in 52? What position does the Church of Rome occupy with respect to the education, and thought, and intelligence of the world to-day? What does this pageant portend for the future? A church blindly rushing on to its own destruction against modern thought and progress; or if allowed to live to be fed only by ignorance and superstition? Or does it seek new life and a fresh start, and to exercise a salutary influence over men's minds by, in the words of Victor Emmanuel spoken to the Italian bishops, "endeavouring

to reconcile faith with science, religion with civilization ? ” Each of these questions opens up a wide and varied field of inquiry, and all we can do in a Sunday morning’s discourse is to give the briefest answer to each.

IV. Looking at them from our point of view, I should say that as far as we see in the assembled priests at Rome the faith, the purity, the self-denial, the benevolence, and the love of truth possessed by the first Christian ministers, we gladly recognise in them the successors of the Apostles—even as we do in every faithful minister of Christ down to the humblest pastor that ever entered a dissenting pulpit—and no more. We believe not in any occult virtue, any priestly magic, handed down from age to age ; and we value a man’s claim to the apostolical succession by the extent of his apostolic labours, and the plentitude of his apostolic gifts. In much the same manner we judge of the claims of the Church of Rome to be the true existing representative of the early Church, and its earthly head, the Pope, to be the successor of St. Peter. We cannot accept the latter dogma as proved by history, because we have not trustworthy evidence that Peter was ever Bishop of Rome. We cannot admit that the Pope inherits Peter’s spiritual power, unless he can show us that he possesses those supernatural endowments with which Peter with the rest of the apostles was collaterally gifted. We cannot admit that the Bishop of Rome has, because he is such, any right to regard himself as the earthly head of Christ’s church, because we fail to find any such assumption made or recognised in the earliest and purest age of the Church, and because we have read how that power was struggled for by

successive bishops of Rome, and only at last gained by causing a vast schism in the Church, even the rending of the more ancient Eastern Church from that of the West, on account of the arrogant pretensions and claims of the latter.

Of these pretensions and claims we judge to-day in the light of the history of the past and the facts of the present. We thankfully acknowledge all of good we find in that church. We remember with gratitude that she has conserved the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian religion through many ages, and that she possesses them to-day. The doctrine of Christ's redemptive work for man, the continued presence of the Spirit in the church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting. Some of the most precious of the hymns we sing to-day have come to us from the devout hearts of her most saintly children; and who among us, if we had been present in the cathedral of St. Peter's in Rome, on Wednesday last, could have refused to join in the full music and evangelical utterances of that noble hymn of the ancient Church—the *Te Deum*? Nor can we forget the curbing and humanizing influences that Church exercised over the barbarous hordes which over-ran Europe in the early part of the middle ages, and how many even of the germs of our own English liberties we owe to the way in which her ministers once stood between imperious barons, and otherwise almost irresponsible kings, and the rights of the commoner people. And then, as we think of the countries from which many of the bishops have come to Rome, we are reminded that in those countries these

bishops, with their clergy and flocks, are the only representatives of the Christian religion there. Nor would we think lightly of the deeds of mercy wrought by many of her sons and daughters. And yet once more, as we contrast the two or three hundred millions of the faithful under the care of the assembled priests at Rome, with the little bands represented by the Council at Jerusalem, we see one indication at least of the growth of Christianity and of the power it has been in the world. All this we thankfully remember, and in these elements and influences of our common Christianity we recognise her right with other Christian churches to a place among the descendants of the little band at Jerusalem.

V. But at the same time we are bound in the interests of truth to remember also, how the Church of Rome has defiled her garments as she has traversed the ages; that she has caught up the rites and superstitions of heathenism into her system, and with them she has disfigured and overladen, and well-nigh hidden the truth of God; that she fixed these in her system by decrees of Councils and Popes; that she lays upon men's shoulders, in direct contravention of the advice of the Apostle Peter himself, burdens heavy and grievous to be borne—"Forbidding to marry, and to abstain from meats, and teaching for commandments the traditions of men," whereby Christianity has been brought into contempt, and men's souls injured. We cannot forget that she has ever been the foe of civil and religious liberty when these have the least run athwart her own claims and pretensions—that to stifle earnest thought and free utterance, she has drawn the sword which Peter

was commanded to put back in its sheath, has been guilty of cruelty the most fiendish and ingenious debased human nature has ever invented ; and that now, if she possessed the power, she would once more light martyr fires, open gates of dungeons, renew the horrors of the Inquisition, shut up our Bible, and reduce a peasantry like the Bible-reading, Bible-loving peasantry of Wales, to the ignorant fanatical condition of that of Ireland. How she has silenced her own gifted sons when they have felt impelled by the Spirit of God to pray for deliverance, and to break through the bonds of ecclesiastical routine, history affords but too many sad examples. We have read how the gifted soul of the Abbe Lammenais was driven into darkness ; how the eloquent tongue of Lacordaire was silenced when the Church of Notre Dame, in Paris, was thronged with men eager to listen to his Christian eloquence ; how, more recently, Pere Hyacinthe, who, foreseeing danger about to rise out of this very Council, dared to lift up his voice in notes of warning, must abandon his church if he would continue faithful as a prophet. And, as an illustration of the way in which free expression of opinion, if it runs at all counter to the Papal will, is to be silenced in the present Council, let me read you the Pope's allocution delivered on the 2nd of December :—" I have called you," he says, " together from all parts of the Catholic world, because I represent the Prince of the Apostles, who said on a most remarkable occasion, ' Lord, to whom shall we go ? you have the words of eternal life.' There will be disputations and contests, and the enemy will not be slow to sow cockle, but with concord and firm-

ness, and remembering the denunciation that he that is not with me is against me, we shall abide in Christ with unshaken and unswerving faith." In the positiveness of his tone and in the arrogance of his pretensions, how unlike he is to any of the bishops who met at Jerusalem. And now you will agree with me, I think, when I say that in the face of all these facts, and the light of past history, we may deem the Romish Church to be a less worthy and faithful representative of the religion of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, than many churches with far less pretensions and of humbler name.

In that early council at Jerusalem the assembled pastors, however diverse the gifts with which they were divinely endowed, stood on an equality; in this at Rome, one bishop among many asserts his supremacy. In that, each Apostle was conscious of his infirmity, and one of the greatest was ready to call himself the least of the Apostles; in this, one chief reason why it is called, is to assert in the face of the world the infallibility of the Pope. In that, there was free and independent utterances of opinion, unconstrained by dictation from any one among their number; in this, the German and Hungarian bishops, who seek to limit the infallibility of the Pope by that of the Council, are regarded with suspicion, and were threatened, as we have seen, by the Pope himself. That one treated as comparatively unimportant matters of ritual, and occupied itself in promoting practical godliness; this will confirm the errors of doctrine and practice which have crept into its church, and in no uncertain language demanded men's assent to them. Only imagine one of the elders presenting St. Peter

with a waxen image of the mother of Jesus, as did the Archbishop of Catania to the Pope. Is it, then, too much to say—that both in its spirit, its demands, and its aims, the Œcumenical Council, now being held in Rome, is at variance with the Apostolic Council held in Jerusalem.

On Thursday last the Pope said to the assembled bishops that “they had come to teach all men the voice of God and to judge with the Pope under the auspices of the Holy Spirit on the errors of human science,” thus, as it appears to me, with the same spirit as that which about three hundred years ago made Galileo burn his books, and which cast him into prison because he dared to say that the earth travelled round the sun, does modern Romanism seek to place itself in hopeless antagonism with the discoveries of modern science. Had those assembled bishops but followed the true teaching of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the God of nature as well as of grace, they would have placed themselves under instruction, have taken elementary lessons in geology, in astronomy, in physics, in all the various branches of natural philosophy, before they deemed themselves capable of dealing with such subjects and with the important issues which arise out of them; but it is useless, it is worse than useless, for them to oppose to the discoveries and teachings which rest upon evidence as clear as that two and two make four, simply the authority of the church. It reminds one of the presumptuous folly of King Canute, when placing his chair before the rising tide, he bade the waves keep back. No man can deplore more than I do myself the attitude some men of science assume towards religion, or the spirit in

which some of them approach the consideration of questions affecting religion and science jointly. But I can conceive of no act more likely to confirm them in that spirit than the fiat of a company of priests that bids them, when the evidence of their senses comes in contact with the traditions and resolutions of the church, to disbelieve their senses and bow to the authority of the church. Would that all men would approach the consideration of these two different yet closely allied classes of questions with the reverence, humility, and care that the vastness of them demands, and which are the surest guarantees for the attainment of the whole truth.

VI. I give utterance to these remarks in no spirit of faultfinding, for all intelligent Christians cannot help but mourn, for the sake of their common Christianity, the attitude thus taken by the extreme sections of the Roman Catholic Church at the present time. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and much of the scorn and just contempt that Roman Catholicism is bringing upon itself, will have to be borne more or less by all Christians, and the hold that Christianity itself should have upon thoughtful men will be weakened. How much that hold has been weakened already by the conduct of the Roman Church in the past, may be in some measure estimated by looking at the present condition of Europe, especially in France, Germany, and Austria. It is difficult to over-estimate the imposing appearance the assembly must present to a spectator as it gathers beneath the dome of St. Peter's, but dissolve it into its elements, resolve it into its constituent parts, follow each bishop home to his

diocese, especially if it be in a civilized country, and you will find how small is his influence among thoughtful and educated men, and even among Christian men who read the Bible for themselves. In this you will find an answer to the Pope's words, borrowed from St. John Chrysostom, "The Church is stronger than Heaven." And so, alas! apparently are the powers of darkness. We would not have the Church of God strong in ignorance and superstition, but we would have it strong, in every section of it, in enlightened faith, in reverent knowledge, in intelligent conviction. I do not undervalue authority in matters of religion, but I would have every Christian man and woman be able to give as a reason for the hope that is in them, not a Thus saith the Pope, or the Council, or the Assembly's Catechism, or Wesley's Sermons, or the Declaration of the Faith and Order of the Congregationalists, but a Thus saith the Word, backed by conscience and reason. Unfortunately, there must always be some, even among ourselves, who will be obliged to take their religion upon trust from others. But our prayer should be that the number of these should be lessened daily, that God would give to His Church a constantly growing accession of reverent enquiry, of simple faith, of desire for unity, and an abundant zeal, that so unhindered at least by her His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth even as it is done in Heaven.





